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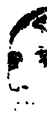
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"HAMMOCK SERIES."

A SANE LUNATIC.

BY

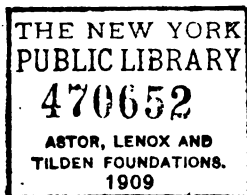
CLARA LOUISE BURNHAM.

Author of "No Gentlemen," etc.

"And I was ta'en for him and he for me,
And thereupon these errors are arose."

—Comedy of Errors.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I.—FAIRYLANDS, ...	7
II.—THE VALIANT LAMKIN, ...	19
III.—A RIFT IN THE CLOUD, ...	33
IV.—BRENTON, ...	40
V.—THE "HERO."	54
VI.—A BIT OF A BLUNDER, ...	65
VII.—BY UMBAGOG, ...	80
VIII.—CHEERING MR. LAMKIN, ...	94
IX.—A PREDICAMENT, ...	109
X.—THE EXPLANATION, ...	127
XI.—THE NEW HOUSEKEEPER, ...	139
XII.—A COUP D' ETAT, ...	153
XIII.—THE GLORIOUS FOURTH, ...	159
XIV.—LESLIE'S DISCOVERY, ...	170
XV.—ON THE "COMET,"	180
XVI.—MISS COBB'S CONFIDENCE, ...	203
XVII.—THE "RETREAT,"	219
XVIII.—LESLIE'S CHAMPION, ...	239
XIX.—LILY ISLAND, ...	260
XX.—AN ANNOUNCEMENT, ...	288
XXI.—A DARING SCHEME, ...	298
XXII.—ON THE THRESHOLD, ...	321



A SANE LUNATIC.

CHAPTER I.

FAIRYLANDS.

"When a woman will she will, you may depend on 't."

LESLIE FORREST had made up her mind. With this young lady that was half the battle. The other half was about to be waged with the unsuspecting, middle-aged gentleman to whom she waved her handkerchief, as she leaned back against the smooth rock of her elevated seat.

Around her the woodbine clambered over the stone, and below her flowed a river, fast and noisily. It encircled on three sides the mansion which rose at some distance behind her; but this particular spot was the favorite of the daughter of the house, for here alone the stream displayed sufficient energy to please her.

The prosperous looking, smooth-shaven gentleman whom she had caught sight of, walking along the driveway, obeyed her signal and approached; his gold-rimmed eyeglasses swinging from his hand, and his keen eyes lighting with pride in the picture formed by the young girl among the woodbine, with the shadows of the maple leaves playing over her

uncovered golden head, and brocading her pale blue dress.

"Good evening, my dear," he said, lifting his hat. "Has Mr. Lamkin come home yet?"

The young girl made a slight grimace, at the same time drawing aside her blue drapery and disclosing the fact that the natural seat among the rocks could accommodate two, if necessary.

"Sit down a minute, father. You are the second person who has asked me about Mr. Lamkin, within a half an hour. I have just had a letter from Twinkle, and she inquired for him feelingly. No, I haven't seen him."

Mr. Forrest took the offered seat with some deliberation. "Is it necessary, Leslie, for you to keep up this correspondence with Miss Valentine?" he asked. "I thought her letters had been less frequent of late, and that perhaps it was quite as well."

The girl's brown eyes glanced up full of surprise.

"They have not been very frequent, but it is a year now since we left school and our interests have naturally grown apart. I am sure we shall never stop corresponding."

Mr. Forrest raised his eyebrows and cleared his throat. He was one of the ablest and most noted lawyers in Boston, but he did not enjoy being employed on the opposite side when his only daughter used this tone.

"As your paths are likely never to be the same again, is it worth while? Had you not better drop one another?" he ventured.

"Indeed no!" exclaimed the girl, an unusual color flashing into her face. "What has made you think of such a thing?"

Mr. Forrest breathed on his eyeglasses and polished them with his white silk handkerchief.

"Mr. Lamkin was speaking of her to me yesterday. He knows her, of course very intimately."

"And she, poor thing, knows him very intimately," put in Leslie, under her breath.

"He gives me the idea that she is rather a wild, harum-scarum young person, with not much—well, not much breeding, perhaps."

"In fact, perhaps Mr. Lamkin hinted that Twinkle is a common kind of girl," suggested Leslie, the back of her neck becoming very straight, and her proud mouth, prouder.

"Yes—perhaps—that is—" hesitated Mr. Forrest.

"Is Mr. Lamkin's judgment likely to be better than mine?" asked his daughter.

Mr. Forrest cleared his throat.

"Would I be apt to choose a common person for my intimate friend?"

Mr. Forrest put on his eyeglasses and looked around into the brown eyes rather fiercely.

"Twinkle and I both lost our mothers when we were little children," continued Leslie, her head drooping a little. "No other girl in school knew how we felt."

Mr. Forrest began to find the rocky seat inadequate accommodation for two.

"The facts of the case are quite the reverse of

what Mr. Lamkin describes. Twinkle's mother, a refined, lovely woman, died when my friend was but thirteen years old. She had no near relatives beside, and must have been a forlorn little object at her mother's funeral, where Mr. Lamkin's father saw her and took pity on her. When he offered to take the child home with him no one objected, and Twinkle has loved him from the day he befriended her so kindly. Mrs. Valentine left a little money, and her daughter has had a good education. 'Uncle Lamkin,' as Twinkle calls him, must be lovely, but the rest of the family, I judge, are much more deserving of the epithet 'common' than Twinkle is. Mr. Lamkin, I know, has a gentlemanly appearance in spite of his peculiarities, but his mother and sisters are severe trials to Nell, I am sure. Mrs. Lamkin spends all her time in writing sentimental poetry for the village paper!" here Leslie dropped her scornful tone. "It is very unfortunate for me, father, that you have allowed yourself to be prejudiced against my best friend, for I was just about to ask you to let me take her with me on a little trip I have in mind."

The sweetness and humility of his daughter's tone completed the enemy's discomfiture.

"Why, my dear, you ought to be a good judge of Miss Nell Valentine's suitability."

Leslie's dimples became witnesses to her satisfaction.

"Quite as good a judge as any morbid dyspeptic

can be," she added, leaning her shoulder cosily against her father's.

"My dear!"

"What? Isn't he morbid? and isn't he dyspeptic? But never mind him. I want to talk about his parents. They have just returned from a drive into the White Mountains. I have a letter from Twinkle describing it. Mustn't it be a delightful trip to take?"

Mr. Forrest looked dubious.

"And you want to do that. You and Miss Valentine and—"

"I thought perhaps you.

"Impossible, my dear—at least for a long time to come."

Leslie puckered her brow and looked thoughtful.

"Wait awhile," suggested Mr. Forrest, "this is only the last of May. Wait until July and take Miss Nell to the seashore."

"I don't see how I can," returned Leslie, with sweet obstinacy.

As she spoke a young man came in sight on the river bank and strolled slowly by. He was below the medium height, and almost dandified in the extreme fashion of his dress. He wore side whiskers and an eyeglass, and looked up in response to a call from Mr. Forrest.

"How you startled me," he cried; "I was in search of you. There is a gentleman at the house who wishes to see you."

Mr. Forrest rose with alacrity.

"You had better consider a more feasible plan Leslie," he said, in parting; "there are plenty of more sensible pleasure-trips to take," and as he passed on, Mr. Lamkin came slowly up the bank.

Leslie watched the new-comer's approach with disfavor.

"I declare I'm quite short of breath," remarked the young man, "unusually so, I believe," and he pressed his hand to his heart with a critical air.

The young girl watched him with an amused smile. His membership in the family was a trial without doubt, and, besides, he had said unkind things about Twinkle, but somehow she never grew angry with Mr. Lamkin. He was so honest in his self-absorption, and so much of a curiosity.

She noted anew the drooping corners of his mouth, and the elevation of one side of his upper lip, a peculiarity which gave him the chronic appearance of having just detected a disagreeable odor.

"Queer that dyspepsia should have such an effect upon the heart, isn't it, Miss Forrest?" he said, ceasing his silent self-examination, "it would interest you, to place your hand here," (drawing nearer) "and feel the palpitation."

Leslie, folding her hands behind her head, declined to be thus entertained.

"Just as you like, some people are nervous about feeling pulsations," replied Mr. Lamkin, parting his coat-tails with the evident intention of taking Mr. Forrest's vacant place. But where was it? He placed his eyeglass carefully and looked all

about. Leslie still leaned back against her clasped hands, her blue draperies flowing about her, and a mischievous light in her half-closed eyes.

"Sit down," she said.

The young man stooped and felt the grass carefully, then shook his head and remained standing.

"A trifle damp, I fear," he returned.

"Don't let me keep you then," said Leslie; "I have a difficult problem to work out."

"Can't I help you?"

"No; I'm afraid not. It is only to decide how to have my own way."

"You'll probably solve it then without my assistance. Do you know, Miss Leslie, whether the new kind of bread I mentioned to the house-keeper, has been ordered?"

"You will have to ask Mrs. Myrick herself about that," returned the girl with some impatience, and, as Mr. Lamkin immediately departed on this congenial errand, she was left alone to think over possible eligible drivers for the trip upon which her heart was set.

Meanwhile, Mr. Forrest had sauntered toward the house, casting glances of satisfaction over the scenery about his home. It lacked nothing in nature or art to enhance its beauty. The velvety lawns, sloping on three sides to the river which flowed in a semi-circle about the peninsula upon which the house stood, were studded here and there with artistically disposed beds of flowers, and foliage plants, while upon a stretch of irregular green sward, extensive

enough to merit the name of park, old elms waved, and fountains played in picturesque hollows.

A sturdy, square, curly-headed boy of about twelve years came out of the house just as he entered it.

"Good evening, father."

"Good evening, Regy"—was the greeting that passed between them as the boy hurried off on some of the pressing business which is always driving youth of his age, then Mr. Forrest entered the drawing-room.

A striking looking man rose to meet him. A man so finely proportioned as not to appear unusually tall until approached by another person. He wore a short, thick beard and moustache, and his large gray eyes, long lashes, and straight brows were markedly handsome.

He bowed to Mr. Forrest with a dignified ease, very prepossessing.

"My name is Favernel," he said; "you may have heard your ward mention me."

"Ah," returned Mr. Forrest, with a nod of enlightenment, as he shook hands with his guest, and motioned him to be seated; "I have heard of you often enough to warrant me in expecting this visit. I am sorry to have kept you waiting."

"Don't mention it, sir. I could have been content to feast my eyes for a much longer time upon the views from your windows," returned the young man, turning to one of the broad sheets of glass, and looking out across lawn and river to the wooded banks with a dim, undulating line of hills rising

beyond. "I had been inclined to think the name of your place over-fanciful, but I have become reconciled to it, sitting here."

"Fairylands? Yes," assented the lawyer, smiling, "my grandmother named the place when she came here a bride to the old house, and the name has clung."

"Appropriately, too," asserted Mr. Favernel.

Mr. Forrest bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment, but did not seem inclined to assist his guest to approach the object of his visit. The two men sat silent for a minute, then Mr. Favernel turned his back upon the view.

"If Miss Appleton were living under your roof, it would be difficult to ask permission to take her to an inferior home. As it is, Mr. Forrest," here the young man cleared his throat, "I have come to ask you for your ward's hand."

"Having previously asked her for it, I suppose?" said Mr. Forrest, in an inoffensive, indulgent tone.

"Certainly, sir; a man does not wish to risk two refusals."

Mr Forrest smiled. "I had not looked at it in that light," he said, glancing with involuntary admiration over the splendid physique before him.

"Had things turned out as I expected," continued Favernel, a cloud overspreading his handsome face; "I should have been able to offer Miss Appleton a home as luxurious as your own."

"Been speculating, eh?" questioned Mr. Forrest.

"No, sir; excepting in the affections of E. L. Volney, Esq. You probably knew of him."

"A millionaire of New York—died, let me see, about two years ago."

"A little more than that."

"I didn't know he had any affections," said Mr. Forrest.

"You are right, he had not—except for cheating and tormenting. I was his nephew."

"Indeed! Not a very affectionate one it seems."

"I was a dutiful one at all events," replied Favernel, with repressed excitement, "and the old gentleman gave every one to understand that I was to be his heir. Imagine then the double injury he did me by not mentioning me in his will."

"I forget to whom he left his property," said Mr. Forrest, appearing not to notice his guest's agitation.

"I have a twin brother," spoke the young man sharply, "my exact counterpart in appearance, but I hope not in character. He was the lucky man—the sole heir. You can draw your own inference."

Mr. Forrest leaned forward in his interest. What a magnificent couple these two men must be, together!

"Your exact counterpart in face, perhaps, surely not in figure."

Favernel was too bitter to notice the implied compliment.

"Yes, in all things. It was always so. Our own mother scarcely knew us apart. We were devoted friends once, and when we outgrew pink and blue

shoulder knots and had passed out of boyhood, the novelty of being taken for one another was quite worn off; so we agreed, Douglas and I, that he should wear a beard like this, while I should shave my face."

"And you have changed your mind?"

"Yes, why should I take the trouble? I never intend to breathe the same air with him again," said Favernel, coldly. "I went abroad soon after my uncle's death, and have but recently returned."

"I knew from Miss Appleton that you had been abroad. Where does your brother reside?"

"In New York; but I infer that he has been visiting Boston by the number of times I was stopped on the street yesterday by strangers. I think," added Favernel, with a disagreeable smile, "that some of Douglas's friends will be likely to cut him in the future."

Mr. Forrest stiffened, repelled by this petty insinuation.

Favernel noticed the change, and adopted a different tone and a business-like air. "And now if you please, Mr. Forrest, we will not refer again to my brother or that unfortunate will. Miss Appleton is good enough to be content with my circumstances which I will set before you."

Here the conversation was interrupted by Leslie, who suddenly appeared, a blonde vision in the dark doorway.

"Father, dinner is ——"

"Ah, Leslie," spoke Mr. Forrest, rising, "Mr.

Favernel, you will dine with us and we will finish our conversation afterward. Leslie, this is Mr. Frank Favernel, of whom you have heard in Blanche's letters. My daughter, Mr. Favernel," and Leslie wondered, as the handsome stranger bowed low to her, why there should be a little coldness in her father's manner

CHAPTER II.

THE VALIANT LAMKIN.

"His hair was something sandy
And was done in knotty curls,
And was parted in the middle,
In the manner of a girl's."

—J. G. Saxe.

WHEN Henry Forrest's college chum and dear friend, Walter Appleton, was on his death-bed, the latter begged Mr. Forrest with his dying breath to prove a friend to his daughter Blanche, when she should need one; and Mr. Forrest promised him that he would act toward her as her guardian, and would see that she wanted for nothing. When, later, Mr. Appleton's sister, Mrs. Lamkin, wrote with profuse underscoring and apology to her dear brother's friend, and begged that her only son might read law in Mr. Forrest's office and reside in his family, the lawyer, in his capacity of friend of the family, did not well know how to refuse; and thus it was that Mr. Eustace Lamkin became a member of the household, scrupulously welcomed by Mr. Forrest, tolerated by Leslie, snubbed by downright Regy, who was exasperated beyond description by the would-be lawyer's petted, mincing ways, and denounced by Mrs. Myrick, the housekeeper, as "a dyspeptic little bore."

Mr. Lamkin's unfeigned indifference to all opin-

ions save those of his tailor and of his various physicians, was something fine; and kind-hearted Leslie might have saved herself many an effort to protect his feelings, they being already too thickly encased in egotism to be reached by ordinary shafts.

The long Spring evenings were very lovely at Fairylands. Ever since her childhood Leslie had been in the habit of attending the concerts, which experience had taught her, the great gold-brown thrushes give at this season, in bidding the world good night. She knew their favorite haunts and seldom missed the vesper service.

On the evening following Mr. Favernel's visit, Regy and Mr. Lamkin were standing at a window of the library, when Leslie, dressed in black, some soft violet wrap over her head and shoulders, hurried by, sending a sudden nod and smile at the pair as she passed.

"What a pretty thing your sister has on," said Mr. Lamkin, adjusting his eyeglass and looking after her, for no woman in the land had a nicer appreciation of well-selected dry goods than this young man.

"You lady-like muff!" was Master Reginald's only response, mental of course, as he flashed a glance of contempt from his bold, brown eyes. But the boy exaggerated. No man can sink utterly into weakness and effeminacy who has an absorbing object in life, and Mr. Eustace Lamkin's gastric region furnished him this object.

"Where, I wonder, is Miss Leslie going?" pursued the invalid.

"To hear the birds," replied Reginald, shortly.

"What birds?" asked Mr. Lamkin.

"The thrushes and cat-birds and things."

"Why that's pretty, that's very pretty," remarked Mr. Lamkin. "I suppose they wouldn't refuse to sing if a larger audience were present."

"I suppose not," returned Regy, between two bars of the popular song he was softly whistling.

Mr. Lamkin crossed the room with short, nervous steps. "I suppose the dew is falling and the grass will be wet," he said.

"Fog's rising from the river—this is an awfully malarial place any way—dew's falling, don't see how you dare go out a night like this, especially 'in the Spring-time gentle Annie,'" remarked the bad boy looking out on the softly tinted Spring sky.

Mr. Lamkin turned about, adjusted his eyeglass and appeared to scent something peculiarly disagreeable; but a sharp look at Regy, who smiled as he met his eye, dispelled his fears.

"Where do you think I shall find your sister?" he asked.

"Where the birds are making the biggest row," said Regy, turning away rudely—"over toward Lily Island," he added more politely.

So Mr. Lamkin began his preparations to resist the inclemency of the weather, and when he had struggled into an overcoat heavy enough to withstand an Arctic Winter, pulled on his over-shoes and

donned a tall hat, he took his cane and sallied forth.

Taking the direction suggested by Regy, he soon caught sight of the violet wrap among the green of the trees.

Leslie banished her involuntary frown at sight of him, and silently motioned to him to pause where he was.

Mr. Lamkin, obeying, stared with his mouth open, up into the tree over her head, whence a bird-song was pouring.

"Come quietly," she said at last, when the song was done. "See, he is not at all afraid of me."

The thrush referred to ruffled his speckled breast, inspected Mr. Lamkin, and evidently coming to the conclusion that he was harmless, commenced his evening toilet.

"What lungs the fellow's got!" said Eustace softly. "Say," gazing admiringly into Leslie's upturned face, "how many numbers have I missed?"

"O, ever so many, and if you're not quiet we shall miss the rest."

At this moment a burst of melody, varied and wild, came from a neighboring tree. The thrush over head, stopped preening his feathers to catch up the melody, and soon the air was filled with the flute-like sounds.

Mr. Lamkin to carry out the jocosely idea, that he was attending a concert, started to applaud. Leslie grasped his hand as she would grasp a falling branch

or any other moving thing, likely to disturb her unconscious pets.

Mr. Lamkin held her hand firmly, and accompanied the clasp with a melting glance. He had designs on the heiress—designs instigated by his fond mother—which he meant to carry out to her utter captivation if his fractious digestion ever gave him time.

The girl snatched her hand away, laughing quietly, and shaking her head when he started to speak.

Finally the music ceased.

“By Jove that’s immense, you know!” exclaimed Mr. Lamkin. “It’s awfully clever in you to know just when this sort of thing is coming off. How did you learn?”

“I hardly remember. I suppose I noticed it when I was a child. That’s all for to-night, there is no use in our staying here any longer.”

“It is not safe either. Why, you have no rubbers on,” said Mr. Lamkin, looking down at the little feet.

“Rubbers? It hasn’t been raining.”

“I know, but my mother always makes me wear my rubbers after sunset. How often she has come out after me with them when I have forgotten.”

“What a devoted mother,” smiled Leslie, “and O, what a lovely evening,” she sighed, wondering why she could not have been permitted to enjoy it without this incubus.

“Too lovely to go in. Let us take a little walk,” suggested her companion. “It will do me good in such pleasant company. The doctor has repeatedly

said that I ought to walk before retiring, but if one is alone it is so easy to worry all the time for fear one has dined indiscreetly."

Leslie laughed, such a soft, spontaneous laugh, no male mortal, not even one with dyspepsia, could withstand it. Mr. Lamkin turned an admiring face.

"Do you know I like to hear you laugh? I do really," he said. It came across him with sudden force, that his companion was extremely pretty. No wonder that Mr. Favernel the night before had shown his admiration so openly. Mr. Lamkin recalled, with some displeasure, the evident enjoyment that Leslie and the guest had taken in one another's society.

"I don't see anything so remarkable about that Favernel," he volunteered abruptly, "unless it's his shoulders."

Leslie raised her eyebrows at this sudden change in the conversation.

"I think he is rather remarkable," she replied. "You ought to be much pleased with your future cousin."

"My future cousin?" echoed Mr. Lamkin.

"Yes. Didn't you know? He is engaged to your Cousin Blanche."

"Well, she had better look after him, that is all I have to say."

Leslie did not notice the insinuation. She had suddenly conceived an idea. Not for five minutes at a time had she forgotten the troublesome question of who should be her driver in the mountains. On

the previous evening she had confided her perplexity to Mr. Favernel, who embraced the occasion to say a great many complimentary things, and who seemed rather wise on the subject of excursioning while he was unable to suggest a way out of the present difficulty. Now Leslie thought she saw the way. It flashed upon her that Mr. Lamkin might be utilized. She appreciated the delicacy of the subject—knew that his nerves, or his heart, or his stomach were liable to take alarm upon the least suggestion of exertion, but she also knew his assailable points—which argued no special subtlety on her part, for he was honesty itself,—and felt sure that she could manage him, and really he seemed the best thing that offered.

“How did your father and mother enjoy their visit to the mountains?” she asked, by way of commencement.

“Enthusiastically,” replied Mr. Lamkin; “they seem to have renewed their youth and all that sort of thing.”

“Do you know that I am quite infected with the desire to go on such a trip. Miss Valentine has written me about it. Perhaps we shall go together.”

“You two alone!”

“Certainly not. We shall want some one to drive us.”

“Oh. You like Nell Valentine very much?” said the young man with a reserved air.

“Extremely. She is my best friend,” asserted

Leslie slowly and impressively. "Your tone suggests that you do not agree with my estimate of her."

Here the walkers left the wooded path for a narrow road which ran at right angles with it.

"Hardly. I think Nell means well on the whole, but there is a certain flippancy, a disrespect—"

"Doesn't she show you proper respect?" asked Leslie, with laughing eyes.

"None—absolutely none," replied Mr. Lamkin slowly and with an impressive gesture. "There is a tendency in her to make game of everything and everybody. She needs curbing and restraining. That's what she needs."

"I suppose you did what you could for her while you were at home."

"Certainly, but it was very little—more, however, than she would do for me," said Mr. Lamkin, in an aggrieved tone. "Oftentimes when my sisters were away I would naturally call upon her for trifling services such as getting the paper, or my slippers, or cutting the leaves of the magazine, or something like that, but not a thing would she do. Father is soft about her—thinks everything she does is right, and the little minx would as lieve lecture me as not."

"Lecture you!"

"Yes, indeed," continued Mr. Lamkin, warming under Leslie's sympathetic tone, and unconscious of her suppressed amusement. "I do assure you, Miss

Forrest, that sometimes when my mother is not by, Nell uses very offensive language to me."

The laugh that bubbled over Leslie's lips was checked by a sudden and increasing sound of horse's hoofs coming down the road. Mr. Lamkin turned his head to cast a frightened look over his shoulder.

"O, a runaway!" he cried. "Save yourself Miss Leslie!" and promptly scrambling over the fence, the young man lost his immaculate hat which rolled behind him into the road.

Leslie, fascinated, looked with pale face and dilated eyes at the fast approaching pair, but, except for grasping the upper rail of the fence, she did not move.

On rushed the frightened animals in their narrow path. Leslie saw that a gentleman and lady were in the buggy. There was a terrific stampede, a cloud of dust, and they had passed her. In an instant the girl felt rather than saw that the driver had regained control of the horses, and, indeed, before she had recovered sufficient strength to move away, a gentleman appeared in the bend of the road around which the buggy had disappeared. He came rapidly towards her and looked her over anxiously, as she turned her white face toward him.

"You are not hurt?" he asked. "I feared a wheel might have grazed you."

"Not at all. Do not stay—that young lady!" gasped Leslie.

"Is seated safely by the side of the road waiting

for me, while a good-natured stranger is holding my horses. Are you alone?" The gentleman's tone was polite, but a trifle authoritative. The twilight had become very dim, and being only a man perhaps this person could not draw the line between a young lady with an equally expensive and bewitching silk wrap drawn over her head and shoulders, and a poor girl wearing an old shawl in something the same fashion.

"I had an escort," said Leslie, looking around with a little hysterical laugh, as she remembered the excessive agility with which Mr. Lamkin had disappeared from the highway.

"And he was afraid?"

"I think he was."

"It would give me pleasure to stay and horsewhip him for you," returned the gentleman, in the same slow, polite tone, "but—"

"Oh, don't stay. Don't wait another minute, I beg. I am quite near home," spoke Leslie, so earnestly that the stranger could only obey.

"I am very sorry to have frightened you," he said, lifting his hat. "Are you sure I can not help you in any way?"

"Quite sure," replied the girl. Then she watched him as he moved down the road.

She should not forget his face. He had stood in such a position that the fading light fell upon him. Leslie was sure she should know him again anywhere. Having quite recovered her composure, she picked up Mr. Lamkin's hat, and holding it scorn-

fully between thumb and finger proceeded on a search for its owner. Suddenly she shook her head with impatient disgust, but hurried the faster. Mr. Lamkin must be near, for the air was full of the valerian which he always took after any disquieting occurrence.

Half a minute more and she could see his figure in the dusk, leaning against a tree, and drawing near, she touched his arm.

A startled exclamation escaped the invalid and he dropped the bottle from which he had just been taking his dose.

"Did I frighten you?" asked Leslie, impatiently. "I'm sorry, but people can not wear bells to warn you of their approach."

"I am grateful to see you alive, Miss Forrest," said Mr. Lamkin, stooping for the vial and restoring it to a place next his heart. "You were wrong not to seek safety in flight with me."

"Never mind that," returned the girl. "I want you to promise me not to mention this occurrence at home."

This, Mr. Lamkin readily did, dimly conscious, perhaps, that his own part in the affair would not appear well in history; while Leslie was clearly conscious that her father would never consent to her mountain drive under Eustace Lamkin's guidance, if he should hear how vastly the young man favored absence of body over presence of mind in an emergency; so she let him walk on beside her, turning a

deaf ear to his account of the state of his nervous system, and revolving her own plans in her mind.

When the young people arrived at home, they found Mr. Forrest sitting on a side piazza enjoying a cigar, and Leslie took a seat on the steps at his feet, while Mr. Lamkin moved wearily into the house.

"Well, little girl, you shouldn't ramble off in this way. I should have been uneasy about you but that Regy was certain that Mr. Lamkin was with you," said Mr. Forrest.

Leslie smiled and turned her head away. Her father's faith in the valiant Lamkin's protection was amusing.

"I've been thinking, father," she said, after a little silence, "that Mr. Lamkin might make a good driver for us."

"What?" asked Mr. Forrest, bewildered visions rising before him of Mr. Lamkin looking rather wizen in a coachman's livery.

"Yes, on our mountain drive," responded Leslie, sweetly, quite conscious that her father had set aside her plan as unworthy a second thought.

"Do you seriously wish to undertake that trip?" he asked, ending his question with an immediate veto; "O, nonsense, my dear; it isn't practicable."

"But it is. Let me tell you. You said I might take Twinkle somewhere, and I choose that, and so long as you can not go—how *lovely* it would be if you could—Mr. Lamkin, being a member of the

family, is quite a proper person, isn't he? Isn't it a good idea?"

"Who have you decided upon to chaperone you?" asked Mr. Forrest, evasively.

"Chaperone us?" repeated Leslie, blankly.

"Yes; were you and Miss Valentine and Mr. Lamkin intending to take a drive of some weeks' duration, by yourselves? What an Arcadian thought."

"How ridiculous that we couldn't—with Mr. Lamkin," mused Leslie, ignoring the sarcasm. "Why," with a laugh, "Twinkle and I could chaperone *him*."

"I know he will not consent to go," added Mr. Forrest, as he threw away the end of his cigar. His daughter laid her hand on his knee and looked up coaxingly.

"Yes, he will, if you don't say anything. Will you leave it to me—*please*?"

"I shall not trouble myself to urge him. Be sure of that," returned Mr. Forrest, sincerely.

"Then I will think up an irreproachable chaperone, only give me a little time. Why—I have it now. How would—"

"Great Scott!" interrupted a boyish voice, explosively, as Regy dove forth from the house to the piazza; "that duffer, Lamkin—"

"Regy, come here," said Leslie, rising and seizing the boy's arm and drawing him off the piazza; "don't you know, dear, you *mustn't* say anything

about Mr. Lamkin before father? How often I've told you."

"I can't help it, he's pouring out his old medicine right there in the library. Whew!" exclaimed Regy, candidly holding his nose; "the smell is enough to stop a clock!" and before Leslie had succeeded in calming her brother's ire, her father had gone into the house.

CHAPTER III.

A RIFT IN THE CLOUD.

"Never a tear bedims the eye,
That time and patience will not dry.
Never a lip is curved with pain,
That can't be kissed into smiles again."—BRET HARTE.

DOROTHY COBB had lived in the sleepy little village of N—, until, to use her own phrase, her mind was wizzling up like a fig. The shallow gossip, the infinitesimal items of interest over which, for want of greater, the old ladies of the town would work themselves into a state of excitement, were indescribably wearisome and exasperating to a woman of her depth and breadth.

"Dorothy," her decrepit old aunt would call from her cushioned seat by the cottage window, "do come here quick—hurry—," and Miss Cobb obeying would be greeted by something like this:

"I just want you to see Mr. Dunn a carryin' his little girl home from the depot. Did you ever see anything so kinder queer as the way her legs dangle down? Now do look there. Did you *ever*?"

From a town where such objects of remark formed almost the only interest, it is not wonderful that Miss Cobb should fly, the instant the only tie that held her there was broken. The feeble old aunt was gone, the cottage sold, and even though her

purse was light, it was with no misgivings that Miss Dorothy turned her eager face toward the city of New York as the busiest, noisiest spot and therefore the greatest contrast to N— which was to be found in all the land.

At the time of the opening of this story, Miss Cobb had for a long year been seeing life in the metropolis as it looks to a friendless music teacher, boarding herself in the third floor back room of a gloomy house in a gloomy street; and as she stood at her window, a few days after the events of the last chapter, it need not be said that there was little eagerness left in the strong, self-contained face.

The view she was looking out upon was not lovely. Sheds, alleys, ash-heaps, and the backs of brick buildings were all she saw, but it is doubtful whether she saw them. They were eclipsed by a scene still more unsightly, which persisted in rising clearly before her mental vision. One which she had just come home from, and in which she saw herself lose her last pupil. The mother of the child had spoken kindly, had praised Miss Cobb's conscientious work, but all the same she had removed her daughter to another, newer-fashioned teacher, and now for the first time, the future looked blank indeed to the middle-aged maiden lady.

A cold Spring rain began to fall outside. The firm lines of Miss Dorothy's mouth quivered a little there in the solitude, and two great drops that did not leave the leaden sky splashed on the window-sill. She furtively wiped her eyes. Not even to herself

did Dorothy Cobb admit easily that she was crying. But this was not an ordinary occasion.

The tears of hopeless, humiliating self-pity rose irresistibly, thick and fast. There was nothing for it but to succumb; Miss Cobb did this as she did everything, thoroughly, and with her might.

She seated herself in a rocking chair, buried her face in her handkerchief and had her cry out. Great, long-repressed sobs convulsed her, and the unwonted indulgence might have been carried beyond controlling limits, had not heavy footsteps on the bare boards in the hall, and a loud knock on her door restored her. Hurriedly, and with one long, determined swallow, Miss Dorothy rose and, going to her washstand, bathed her face; but after the heavy knock the steps had receded, and when she opened the door, a letter and a long flat box lay on the floor before her.

She looked at them in surprise a moment, without offering to touch them; for when had she received a letter before! But her sight was good even when tear dimmed, and the ridiculous, upright, stiff chirography showed that letter and package were both unmistakably her property. Lifting them then, she reclosed the door and laying the box on a table, opened the letter. It read thus:

FAIRYLANDS, May 31, 187—.

DEAR COUSIN DOROTHY:—

I am Leslie Forrest. Don't you remember me? It is ten years since we met, I know, but I shall never forget you and your kindness, and only hope you have as affectionate a remembrance of me. What a poor, sickly little creature I was when father took me to your

farm. You gave me a new start then physically, and now I am a strong girl without an ache or a pain. I am sure you will think I do you credit when we meet, for we are going to meet very soon, if you agree. I have invited an old school friend to take a drive with me into the White Mountains. A gentleman friend is going to be our driver, and in choosing a chaperone, I immediately thought of you. Father says you are teaching and will be sure to refuse me; but I am quite certain you want a vacation. Then I really want to see you again, and when you have once broken away from your cares, why couldn't you come home with me, after the trip, and make a little visit? Just think how much we owe you in the way of hospitality and good times. I sent you some photographs of Fairylands by the last mail to tempt you all I can. If you consent to my first request, please telegraph me immediately, and meet me on the 6th of June, at the Mansion House, Brenton, Maine. Enclosed, please find a check for your traveling expenses. You have said "Yes" many a time to my—"please, Cousin Dorothy," so I have hopes that you may do so once again.

Ever your affectionate,

LESLIE.

There was a smiling, relieved expression on Miss Cobb's face as she finished reading this epistle, that belied her swollen eyes. She did not stop to remark upon the fact that for ten years she had remained unnoticed by these rich relatives. Her second cousin, Henry, had paid her handsomely for her care of his daughter, in that time so long passed. Why should she expect more of him? It only remained for her to be glad now, that Leslie's scarcity of near female relatives made her services desirable a second time.

She glanced up as a shaft of sudden sunlight struck into the room. A rainbow was spreading its lovely arch over the unsightly landscape.

"Do I need a vacation?" said Miss Cobb to herself, with a kind of pitiful humor.

A vacation from hand to mouth living; from make-shifts innumerable; from baker's bread diet; from loneliness. No matter what came afterward, this vacation, this help in the hour of sore need was a divine gift.

Mechanically Miss Dorothy untied the large photographs and spread them before her in silent delight.

"Fairylands—I believe so," she said softly.

She closed her poor tired eyes and said a little prayer; opened them and looked once more at the pictured beauty of woods and water, then caught her breath in one sudden sob, put on her hat and—went out to telegraph.

So Leslie's willful plan was made to work for good. And not only here. Down in the Maine village of Brenton, it was to carry joy to the heart of a little maiden whose surroundings were far more uncongenial than Mr. Lamkin, in his critical moments, had ever dreamed.

It had been a blue day for Nell, that on which the good news came, and she was but a dull Twinkle, thinking dull thoughts, and giving way to melancholy in a manner seldom indulged in by her.

"'It is always darkest before day;' then something very nice ought to be about to happen to me," she thought, as she knelt on the floor in her bedroom, cutting out a basque from scarlet cashmere.

Miss Dora Lamkin, a heavy-eyed, stout young woman, sat by, watching the slashing strokes of the scissors with satisfaction.

"Just let Nell Valentine get down on one knee, and get her scissors into something for me, and I'm happy," she often said, when praising the cleverness of head and hands which had grown so useful in the house.

One the whole, Twinkle bore her trials very well with the slatternly poetess and her high-colored, over-dressed daughters; but days would come when everything seemed unbearable, and this was one of them.

Miss Dora discerned in a vague way the little brunette's discontent. She knew something must be wrong because Nell had offered no objection to the flaming color of the new basque; so she sat in silence watching the petite, pretty figure, the black head bent over the work, and the fringe of hair combed a trifle sidewise across the forehead.

"Say, Nell," she said at last, her cousin's school name never having come within her ken. "You remind me a little of a Shetland pony, you're so small and sort of saucy looking."

Twinkle straightened her eyeglasses, and went on with her work in desperate silence. That very moment the door opened, and an envelope tossed into the room, struck the busy little hand. It needed only the sight of Miss Forrest's handwriting to lift the heavy cloud, and when Nell, relapsing into a sitting posture, had read her letter, her dark face was illuminated.

She looked up for a quick instant at her cousin, but stopped herself as she was about to speak, and

suddenly fell to work again with increased energy.

Miss Dora was relieved to see that the good news, whatever it might be, was not likely to interfere with the completion of her work, and Nell looked so much more cheerful that she ventured a question.

"You don't think the basque will be too showy, do you?" she asked, with some timidity.

"Oh, no, not if you tone it down with plenty of gold braid and brass buttons," replied Twinkle, looking worthy of her name, as she dropped her scissors and gazed up at the speaker.

"Dora," she said impressively. "Miss Forrest will be here to-morrow."

"O, good gracious!" responded the other in an appalled tone; "it's corn-beef day."

She stood in as much awe of the friend whom Nell often mentioned as the mistress of Fairylands, as she could have felt for the veritable queen of that realm.

"And in a few days," continued Twinkle, slowly, "I am going away with her to the mountains."

"Do—do you think you can finish the basque before?" questioned Dora, but before the deliberate sentence was formed, the young girl had left the room.

CHAPTER IV.

BRENTON.

"Enjoy the spring of Love and Youth.

To some good angel leave the rest."—H. W. LONGFELLOW.

WHEN the train from Boston stopped at Portland on the following day, a very trig-looking, stylish young lady, dressed in black and wearing eyeglasses, entered the forward car, and walked through the train scanning the passengers on the right and left as she went. Suddenly a young girl with remarkable yellow hair leaned from one of the seats and touched her

"Twinkle!"

"Leslie!"

A gentleman sitting beside the blonde passenger evidently becoming inspired with the idea that his room would be more highly appreciated than his company, raised his hat and vacated the seat.

"How mean," ejaculated Twinkle, as she glided into the vacant place and kissed her friend.

"Well, that is an original greeting, certainly," remarked Leslie.

"Nothing but an ingenuous expression of disappointment, my dear," returned Twinkle, airily; "between the time you attracted my attention, and the time when that young man left his seat, there was

a delicious instant when I thought you had brought him with you—thought he was a friend of yours. Isn't he handsome?"

"Almost too delicate-looking for a man," objected Miss Forrest, remembering Frank Favernel's gigantic attractions.

"What an absurd idea. He is elegant," asserted Nell, "and I wish I knew him. Oh, I'm common, Leslie," she added, calmly, noting some surprise in her friend's face; "I've grown just as common as I can be."

Leslie felt an instant's dismay, remembering her father's words, but a quick, comprehensive scrutiny of her companion reassured her.

"Now honestly, Leslie, don't I look changed? Isn't there something tawdry and cheap-looking about me?"

Leslie smiled. The exquisite neatness of her own costume was no greater than that of her friend.

"But I am," persisted Twinkle. "I say 'good gracious,' and all such things."

"You always did, you silly child!"

"Did I?" asked the other, evidently comforted by the idea; "but it disgusts me to find how anxious I am for a little excitement. Really when I saw that gentleman just now, my first thought was how much I should like to know him."

"What a dreadful state of things!"

"Yes, it is," said Twinkle; "but I tell you it isn't very easy to be high-bred and indifferent when you haven't had a single thing happen to you since

you can remember—when you feel just like a vegetable.”

Leslie smiled at the explosive energy with which this was said.

“I must tell you about this young man since you noticed him so particularly,” she returned.

“Do. What is his name?” asked Nell, with great interest.

“I don’t know. I don’t know him, but he has twice been very kind to me. First, one evening lately, when I was walking in a lane near home, he drove by, and nearly ran over me—”

“Why the good-hearted, philanthropic creature!”

“Let me finish, you little goose! I was going to say that when he had reined in his fiery steeds, he came walking way back to find out whether he had hurt me.”

“Ah! romantic situation.”

“The other time was to-day. The most odious, untidy, tobacco-chewing man came and sat in this seat with me. He made me so home-sick I didn’t know what to do, and I wished heartily that I had not refused my father’s company on the journey. Well, that dreadful man-mountain began to *talk* to me, and just then who should come up but this good Samaritan. Imagine my sensation of relief when he claimed the seat, sent the creature away, and raising his hat settled himself beside me and went on reading his newspaper as though nothing had happened.”

“That comes of being so very pretty,” said Nell, thoughtfully. “There is something in it, Leslie; you

haven't been thrown with him twice for nothing. If you ever meet him again—well, the third time never fails, you know. O”—with a sigh—“some people are so fortunate, but,” suddenly changing her manner, “I ought not to utter a word of complaint, something has happened to me at last, you good, kind girl. What put it into your head?”

“Your account of your friend's drive; and I have come to cast myself on Mr. Lamkin's instruction as to ways and means. You say he is very pleasant.”

“He is a dear!” returned Nell, “worth a dozen little apes like his son. Are you going to hire a driver, Leslie?”

“No,” returned the girl, with a comical glance; “the driver is already engaged. Mr. Eustace Lamkin has kindly consented—”

“Why, Leslie Forrest! Why, Leslie *Forrest!*” exclaimed Nell, the astonished burst followed by a laugh, “what in the world— Why, that will be *horrid!*”

“There wasn't any one else,” explained Leslie, earnestly. “I knew father would not let me go unless with a friend.”

“But the *idea!*” exclaimed Twinkle again; “I would not have believed that you could prevail on Eustace Lamkin to do anything which required so much exertion as driving a pair of horses up and down hill. Why, he must be in love with you. How came he to consent?”

Leslie turned a pair of mischievous eyes on her

friend, and a conscious color crept into her face as she answered :

“ The doctor ordered the trip for him.

“ Your doctor ? ” suspiciously.

“ Yes—and his.”

Nell grasped the situation immediately. “ Leslie Forrest—Leslie Machiavelli Forrest, you schemer ! ” she said slowly, squeezing her friend’s hand admiringly.

“ It will do him ever so much good, won’t it ? ” asked Leslie demurely, looking down at the Harper in her lap.

“ I don’t know. I haven’t studied his case. You have, I suppose.”

“ O yes. I have,” said Leslie.

The two girls were silent a moment, then they looked at each other and laughed long and heartily, Nell’s eyeglasses rolling off her straight little nose.

“ And my cousin Miss Cobb is going with us,” said Leslie at last.

Nell looked a shade disappointed. “ What for—ballast ? ” she asked.

“ Yes, and badly enough we shall need it with such a person as you in the party,” retorted Leslie.

“ Be careful,” returned Nell, “ the next station is Brenton, so you are in my power now and you want to treat me well. Leslie,” she says, with a sudden wistful change of tone, and another, but timid touch of her gloved hand on that of her friend, “ I wish everything were nicer here—you know dear, aunt Lamkin will very likely make you listen to some of

her poetry, and the girls will stare at you—and your clothes—and, maybe, try on your hat!"

At the sincere woe with which Nell utters the latter foreboding, Leslie has to laugh.

"I shall not mind what they do in the least; so don't think about it, Twinkle."

"And aunt has a horse, Jericho," pursues Twinkle mournfully, "old as the hills, and she'll want to take you driving with him. She thinks he's a banner horse."

"Are you sure that isn't slang?" asks Leslie, but Nell only sighs as the train stops, and she leads the way out to the platform, where a stout lady, none other than the poetess herself, welcomes Leslie effusively and walks beside her to the house, not far distant.

"I ought only to deposit my hand bag," remarks the guest when they have arrived, "and then go to the Mansion House to see if Cousin Dorothy has come."

"Certainly," assents Mrs. Lamkin. "Nell you might drive your friend around there, it's kind of out of the way."

"Shall I?" questions Nell with raised eyebrows. "Jericho, you know," she adds in an undertone.

"I should be much obliged," returns Leslie with becoming gravity; so, in a short space of time the old phaeton and older white horse are brought around to the carriage step, and Mrs. Lamkin comes heavily in to apprise the young ladies of its arrival.

"Mercy aunt!" exclaims Nell, starting to her feet, "you haven't left him standing there untied!"

"For shame, Nell, to frighten Miss Forrest. Jericho is perfectly safe, perfectly," says Mrs. Lamkin untying her bonnet strings. "You are not nervous, are you?" Then, as Leslie replies in the negative, she follows the girls out to the gate, and approaches the horse, who stands with his fore-feet in the second position, apparently enjoying a nap previous to setting forth.

"Now Miss Forrest, don't let Nell hurry Jericho," says the hostess, stroking her favorite's nose.

"I'll drive him myself if you say so," returns Leslie, stepping into the vehicle.

"Great Heavens, no!" cries Nell, drawing on her gloves. "Do you think I would let you risk your life in any such way as that? You will have all you want to do, to hold on tight while we're flying around corners."

"Why, Nell, what does possess you?" asks the poetess, who is as literal by nature as she is imaginative by profession. "You mustn't mind her Miss Forrest. O wait a minute, I have a box I want you to leave at the express office," and while Mrs. Lamkin hurries into the house on this errand, Nell heaves a long sigh.

"I believe somewhere near twenty-five years ago, Jericho was a very fast trotter," she says, "but now,"—and she slaps his back with the reins; the placid animal changes his weight to another leg but does not open his eyes, "the dear old thing would like to stand to eternity I believe."

"Here it is," says Mrs. Lamkin, reappearing, "now Jericho, they're ready, and, Jericho," here she pulls her favorite's head toward her and whispers to him.

Leslie smiles.

"You may laugh but he understands me," asserts the hostess, her confidence over.

"Don't you know," says Nell, "that poets have communication with beasts and birds denied the common herd? Go 'long."

They start, and the poetess calls after them,—
"Herds, Nell, then you would have had good rhyme."

"That's it," says Nell, "that's the way she does it. It is too comical to hear her—Bell Cell Dell Ell Fell Hell—Oh excuse me, I never meant it. Do go along Jericho, I declare I've forgotten the whip. Never mind, she wouldn't have given it to me if I had asked her. She would be afraid I'd maltreat her race-horse. Isn't it odd what a flopping, disjointed gait he has! I suppose," she adds wistfully "you have beautiful horses."

"I have my ponies" replies Leslie.

"What color?"

"White."

"O what an appetizing, creamy turnout you must be altogether. You are so pretty and flossy yourself."

"Mercy! You make me feel like a poodle," protests Leslie.

"Then you have silver-mounted harness I know,

and a lovely basket carriage," continues Nell. "Those," slapping the reins emphatically on Jericho's back, "those are the things I want to be rich for. I love handsome houses and clothes and everything else too much for my own good I dare say, but the out-door things are the best. O for a fairy god-mother! May we go around a little? You are not particular to go straight to the hotel, and the longer we are away—that is," adds Nell, recollecting herself, "I like best to have you all to myself."

"There is no great hurry, but I feel that I must get to cousin Dorothy pretty soon. Then our driver will probably arrive to-night, and we must get all the directions for our trip, and there seems plenty to do. Do you know I have quite set my heart on taking you back to Fairylands when I go, Twinkle?"

A long-drawn, rapturous "Oh!" falls from Nell's lips, but she shakes her head.

"It would unfit me entirely to come back here, Leslie; besides, my aunt would not consent. She couldn't spare me."

"I thought she had daughters."

"Yes, but lately I have seemed to take the care of things more. This visit with you is enough pleasure. I've settled it, dear, that I won't go."

It would seem that Jericho has at the same moment arrived at the same conclusion on his own account, for he comes to a stand-still and turns his head far around to interview a fly which is taking liberties with one of his fat sides.

"Jericho, my dear," remonstrates Nell, picking up the reins which have been hanging loosely around the dash-board.

They are in a shady lane, and the old horse evidently considering it useless to try to find a pleasanter spot than this, walks calmly to the side of the road, and pulls hard at his check-rein as he looks longingly at the grass.

In vain Nell jerks the reins, coaxes and commands him, he will not stir.

"Be sure you don't hurry him," laughs Leslie. "Mrs. Lamkin must have told him to stop here when she whispered to him."

"It's no use," announces Nell, "he has taken a fancy to some of that grass and he's obliged to have it."

So the girls alight from the buggy and Leslie being the taller, loosens the check-rein, and Jericho begins his lunch.

"There are some daisies, how very opportune," says Leslie, seating herself beneath an oak tree near. "Now, Twinkle, if you have a lover, here is a chance to discover his sentiments."

"Don't trouble yourself so long as I live in Brenton," says Nell. "Try one for yourself."

"I haven't the sign of a lover," says Leslie, shaking her head.

"Nonsense. I call that young man in the cars the sign of one. I'll try him for you," and leaning over, Nell breaks a daisy and pulls off its satin

leaves. "He loves you," she says triumphantly, as she finishes, "I said so. I knew it all the time."

"You always were a precocious child, Twinkle. No, my dear," says Leslie with a grave shake of the head. "I shall never marry, because the only man I admire, loves another."

"Oh," says Twinkle, rearranging her eyeglasses with deep interest. "Go on."

And Leslie does go on—describing Frank Favernel in the most flowery language at her command.

"Favernel," repeats Twinkle finally. "That's the queerest name I ever heard. So he is going to marry Eustace Lamkin's cousin. Perhaps he won't."

Leslie laughs. "Is that suggestion designed to comfort me, dear? Don't speak of such a thing. Mr. Favernel's engagement constitutes half his attractiveness."

"And, anyway, your hero of the cars is evidently your fate. What kind of a person is our chaperone, Leslie?"

"I haven't seen her for ten years."

"For pity's sake! Well, I do think you have made up the strangest party."

"I remember her perfectly and know I shall begin with her just where I left off. She is rather stiff and unsmiling in manner, but with the levellest head and kindest heart you can imagine."

"An ideal chaperone. I'll not keep you away from her any longer. Prepare yourself when we get home to tell aunt Lamkin just how many times a day Eustace sneezes, just how much he eats, just

how many hours he works, etc. She will cross-question you nearly to death."

"So long as she doesn't expect me to remember how many doses of medicine he takes during the day, I think I shall do very well ; but I am glad he is coming so soon to answer for himself."

"Leslie, what *would* aunt Lamkin say if she knew how you have entrapped her rosebud into this trip?"

"O dear!" exclaims Leslie in real dismay. "Supposing it should do him any harm."

"Fiddlesticks! Uncle Lamkin will be delighted with the idea. He just fumes at the way Eustace's fond mamma coddles him. You ought to have seen her the other day when I happened to read from one of your letters that her idol had a cough. She threatened to faint and I assure you she is no light weight, so uncle Lamkin hastened to reassure her.

" 'What if he has a cough, ma?' he said. 'I saw a man down street to-day, who had a cough and he weighed two hundred and fifty pounds.'

"Aunt Lamkin just glared at him and said, 'Anthony, your heart is just as much hardware as any kettle in your store!' and of course, when she had calmed down a little, she went and wrote a poem." Here Nell sighs. "Uncle Lamkin won't listen to her poetry, so I have to. That time it was something like this :

A mother bade her son farewell,
With streaming eyes she saw him go.
The fate before him, who could tell?
That mother's heart was full of woe.

• Intrepidly he took the train,
No fear of future crossed his mind,
He never thought of storm or rain,
Or of the home he'd left behind.

Amid the city's dust and din,
He had a perch far from the floor,
And daily he grew pale and thin,
While conning law books o'er and o'er.

A warning to his mother came,
Her boy was fading day by day!
Come home, my child, nor think of fame,
We will to other climes away!

and so on. There are ever so many more verses, exhorting Eustace to drink the 'milk of kine,' etc. I can't remember them, but I doubt if you escape for all that. Mrs. Lamkin considers it one of her best efforts."

"Mr. Lamkin doesn't seem exactly like his mother and sisters—doesn't seem exactly their sort," observes Leslie, when they are quiet again.

"That is true, he is more refined. I don't know how it happened. They regard him as a superior being. There isn't the least feeling of equality or congeniality between him and his sisters. But we must go. Our steed seems rather restive. Jericho Lamkin, what are you doing?"

The old horse is backing the buggy among a clump of bushes, in his endeavors to reach a tempting bunch of clover. Nell gathers the clover and holding it to his mouth, turns him around till he is faced in the right direction, and soon he is trotting deliberately toward the hotel.

Miss Dorothy is there waiting. She is sitting at a window of the public parlor discovering sundry points of resemblance between Brenton and the narrow hamlet where her youth was passed, when suddenly there appears in the low doorway, a young lady, so evidently strange and unused to the surroundings, that Miss Cobb, herself a stranger, is moved to respond to her look of inquiry.

"Do you want anything?" she asks in a clear voice.

The new comer glides forward with outstretched hands, and an expression of satisfaction in her young face.

"Yes, I want *you*, cousin Dorothy," she says cordially.

CHAPTER V.

THE "HERO."

"His ready speech flowed fair and free,
In phrase of gentlest courtesy."—LADY OF THE LAKE.

LESLIE finds sturdy, jolly Mr. Lamkin *père*, able and willing to take all responsibilities off her shoulders, with regard to the preparations for the drive, and her path is made smooth up to the morning of the start, when the roomy carriage, and pair of strong bay horses arrive, under the superintendence of Eustace.

Miss Cobb has come to the Lamkins to join her charges, and as the carriage drives up, she goes to the window and looks out. It is her first sight of Mr. Eustace Lamkin, and she turns around to Leslie with some dismay.

"That little dandy!" she protests in her strong, clear voice.

"Hush-sh," says Leslie, for the windows are open. "He is used to horses and his father says he can do it perfectly well."

Leslie dwells upon this bit of comfort, for she can not get rid of the remembrance that she hid Mr. Lamkin's cowardice from her father, nor can she escape a feeling that she has been very willful in this whole matter and that if anything happens

to the party, the entire blame will rest upon her own head.

"Then, besides, the doctor ordered it for him, Miss Cobb," adds Twinkle, who is putting in a last pin before the mirror.

Miss Forrest blushes as she looks at her friend. Nell is in such a state of effervescent happiness, that it is impossible for Leslie to feel that she has done altogether wrong, since already her plan has given so much pleasure. A look at Miss Cobb's stern yet serene countenance, which always softens when its glance falls upon her, is an additional comfort; for Miss Dorothy has said enough to let Leslie know how timely was her invitation; so, with a suddenly lightened heart, the girl turns to Nell, and surveys the little figure in its trim kilt dress of black camel's-hair, and black hat with cardinal and cream-colored roses, under which the side-wise bang shows saucily.

"You little witch," says Leslie, admiringly, "nothing but your eyeglasses saves your dignity and makes you look over twelve years old."

"And you, Leslie," returns Nell, surveying the tall, brown draped figure before her—"I sha'n't compliment you—there's too much frivolity displayed in the way those poppies and wheat in your hat cling down over your hair. You'll enchant the very boulders; but come, Jehu will be impatient. Aren't we all ready?" and Nell leads the way down stairs, where she tries to feel a little sorry to be taking leave of her adopted family. She does feel grateful to them for their negative good behavior of

the last few days. Her aunt has been engaged in some particularly engrossing literary effort, one of the objectionable Misses Lamkin has been called away to visit a sick friend and the other has not—overtly—tried on any of Leslie's clothes. More she could not have asked. She finds Mrs. Lamkin standing by the carriage, flooding her son with warnings and suggestions, to all of which he pays no attention.

"I quite depend upon you to look out for him, Miss Cobb," continues the anxious mother as the chaperone draws near. "Be a mother to him!"

Miss Cobb stares at this proposition, and, when the young man is presented to her, looks as though she would have to think twice about it.

"Good-bye, dear uncle Lamkin," says Nell, squeezing her guardian's hand, "be good while I'm gone."

"Ah, this young lady is the person you will have to look out for, Miss Cobb," remarks the old gentleman, warningly, "she's a housefull!"

"Uncle Anthony," says Nell, pouting, "it would have been quite enough to have said a carriagefull, under the circumstances. What is the matter, aunt?" for Mrs. Lamkin is pantomiming laboriously to her; "O, I understand; you want me to sit behind with Miss Cobb."

"You always were quick as lightning to take an idea, Nell," says her uncle, and the girl makes a saucy face back at him, while they both laugh in mutual amusement at Mrs. Lamkin's heavy, but

successful maneuvering to induce the heiress to sit beside her son.

At last they are all settled and the horses start.

Nell leans from the carriage to throw a kiss from the plenitude of her content.

"Don't let any of those evil-disposed racing-men steal Jericho," is her parting shaft, to which uncle Lamkin responds with a wink and a shake of the fist, combined with the hearty laugh which always greets his favorite's sallies, however absurd.

It is a beautiful June morning, and what they are doing seems a charming thing to every member of the party. Miss Cobb is pervaded with a sense of peaceful enjoyment. Nell is full of pleasure in the novelty of her surroundings. Leslie feels that stolen fruit is sweet, and Mr. Lamkin, secure in the list of written directions, and the mysterious looking little vials which are disposed in various pockets about his person, inflates his lungs and beams with cheerfulness toward the world in general.

"Just to think," sighs Nell, leaning back. "I haven't to decide what we shall have for dinner to-day."

"I suspect that you know more about it than any one else," remarks Leslie, "since you put up the lunch."

"I've forgotten," asserts Nell with a decided gesture. "I don't remember a thing about it."

So the drive begins. Every object in the landscape is beheld with enthusiasm. The river that leaves and rejoins the party all day; the sheep being

washed in its waters; the mossy rock table protected by spreading trees where the lunch is enjoyed; the promising, velvety hills—all are objects of delight, while the branching starlike tree roots that enclose the fields as they pass, cause Nell to repel the simile, “homely as a stump fence,” forever.

The day passes without special event of any kind. No doubts as to the beneficial results of his trip as yet assail the driver, and his sleep on the first night is unusually deep and peaceful. It is on the afternoon of the second day that the first approach to an adventure occurs. The party are seated as on the previous day—Leslie being beside Mr. Lamkin who congratulates himself that Nell is not chattering directly into his ear.

Miss Cobb’s grave face looks serenely out of her gray bonnet, as she silently gazes about her, in obedience to Nell’s exhortations to “look here,” or “look there.”

Privately the chaperone has decided that Twinkle is rather a noisy young person; but that young lady in happy unconsciousness of criticism rattles on.

“Do you realize,” she cries, “that we are in a perfect amphitheater of mountains this minute?”

“Rather faint as yet,” observes Mr. Lamkin. “Why, what am I thinking of!” he exclaims, hastily gathering the reins into one hand and taking out his watch. “It must be more than half an hour since lunch. I never came so near forgetting my phosphate before. Miss Leslie, may I trouble you?”

and stopping the horses, Mr. Lamkin places the reins in Leslie's hands, and drawing forth a bottle and spoon from a little pocket case, he proceeds to measure out the dose with anxious care.

Miss Cobb stares at the back of his head, and shakes her own with an indescribable air of impatience. The driver is an enigma, which she is just beginning to understand.

Nell chuckles audibly, and gives the chaperone a most inelegant, but mirth-provoking nudge.

"Brain-food, you know," she explains.

"I am glad he didn't forget it then," mutters Miss Cobb; but she need not lower her voice. Until the rite in which Mr. Lamkin is engaged is safely performed, he is deaf to minor matters.

The horses start again, and Nell readjusts the eyeglasses which always tumble off her nose when she laughs. Suddenly she catches sight of a pedestrian a short distance ahead of them. "Leslie, there's a man!" she exclaims with interest. "Young, I know by his gait. Dear me, do you suppose he's a fireman or a peddler? His hat looks one thing and his knapsack another. If he's young and a peddler, let's stop and buy him out. *Gracious Powers!*"

This exclamation Miss Valentine utters as the carriage passes the gentleman and she gets a look at his face. She grasps Leslie's shoulder and looks at her in silence for the space of half a minute, then she finds her voice:

"Leslie, I congratulate you. I wish you joy and I speak to be your bridesmaid!"

"Twinkle, I object to traveling in a carriage with a lunatic," remarks Leslie. "You've been flighty ever since we started, and now the turning point is passed. You're crazy."

"Leslie, promise to let me be your bridesmaid, and I'll tell you something."

"Well, I promise."

"That fireman, peddler, pedestrian, whatever he is, is your hero! O, I shall write to aunt Lamkin. There's no help for it. This scene *demands* a poem."

"Nell, please behave yourself, or else explain yourself to cousin Dorothy. She'll begin to think I am no better than you are."

"I said the third time never fails, and it won't, you see if it does," persists Nell, with excitement. "Miss Cobb, why don't you speak?"

"Miss Valentine, why do you speak?" retorts Miss Dorothy, bluntly. "I should think you would be tired."

"I'm sure I'm nearly deaf," adds Mr. Lamkin, in a kind of resigned aside.

"I didn't catch that, Eustace," says Nell, leaning forward anxiously.

"You will catch it, Twinkle, if you don't stop being such a goose," laughs Leslie.

Upon this Nell leans back in her corner, while the horses enter a dark opening in the thick woods which line the edge of the amphitheater. Hardly is the carriage well within when some part of the harness snaps.

"Now then—what's the matter?" inquires the driver in an injured voice.

"Dear me, I hope it isn't anything serious," says Leslie, anxiously, feeling guiltily conscious of Mr. Lamkin's incapacity. She holds the reins again, while Mr. Lamkin dismounts and surveys the harness through his eyeglass.

Miss Cobb watches him for half a minute, then with a decided air leaves the carriage.

"You get back there," she says to Eustace. "I'll attend to this."

"Why, cousin Dorothy!" exclaims Leslie, half protesting, half hopeful. "Hadn't you better—"

"Young man," interrupts Miss Cobb, raising her voice, "will you help me a minute," and to Leslie's dismay and Twinkle's open-eyed interest, the pedestrian whom a few minutes ago they passed on the road, advances at the call.

"Something snapped here," continues Miss Cobb, handling horses and harness as one who is used to both. "O, there's the trouble! Have you a knife?"

The stranger smiles at her absorbed air, and the ease with which she addresses him.

"I have one which is a whole cutlery establishment in itself," he replies, producing the article from his pocket.

"Then will you just make holes through those straps for me, please," says Miss Cobb.

The young man hastens to comply. "Have you any twine?" he asks when it is accomplished.

"No, but no matter. Give me a hairpin to mend harness."

"I regret that I haven't one, madam," responds the stranger, gravely.

Miss Cobb smiles broadly. "I have, which is just as well," she says, drawing the article from her hair and joining the broken strap with a deft twist of the wire.

"This is not new business to you," remarks the gentleman.

"No sir. A farmer's daughter. Very much obliged to you, sir," and so, with curt politeness, Miss Cobb dismisses her assistant. Mr. Lamkin, who has obediently retaken his place by Leslie, here puts in his voice, which sounds somewhat piping after Miss Cobb's clear, penetrating contralto.

"We are extremely obliged to you, sir," he says, "I wish I could offer you a seat in our carriage, but I presume you would not accept. You are evidently on a walking expedition."

"Yes," responds the hero, raising his hat as he turns toward the carriage. "I am on my way to meet a friend who is to join me in my walk."

"Then good day, sir," and the carriage moves on.

Nell's attentive countenance relaxes. "Miss Cobb, why didn't you find out his name?" she asks.

"I hadn't any use for it," replies Miss Cobb.

"You could have introduced him" says Nell reproachfully.

"To you young ladies? a nice chaperone I should be," remarks Miss Dorothy.

"Bother!" is Twinkle's retort. But it scarcely sounds rude from her. Twinkle is one of the privileged characters sprinkled through the world, who claim, and are allowed greater latitude of speech than ordinary mortals.

Mr. Lamkin's pride has not been at all injured by Miss Cobb's summary rejection of his services. "A smart, capable woman" he calls her to Leslie, who acquiesces with a feeling of sincere gratitude that one person deserving that description is of the party.

Nell, who has sulked in her corner for a short space of time, leans forward at sight of a spring by the road-side.

"Stop the horses a minute please, Eustace; let me have a drink of that water. Where's the 'squatch,' Leslie?"

Leslie opens a hand-bag and produced a boat-shaped drinking cup of patent-leather which Nell jumping from the carriage fills and passes around.

"Of all the contrivances for drinking," grumbles Mr. Lamkin when it comes to him. "Why couldn't you bring a mug?"

"A mug! perish the thought!" cries Nell between two swallows. "A 'squatch' is the proper thing, so primitive you know. You get a little water in your mouth and the rest runs over your face and down the front of your dress; but then there's no conventionality about it and what a comfort that is."

The horses bend thirstily to the fresh water that bubbles up through a hollow reed and thence falls into a trough by the road-side.

Nell shakes the last drops from her cup and re-enters the carriage. Mr. Lamkin backs the horses into the road, and they pursue the journey, out of the woods, up and down steep hills in sight of the mountains, sometimes in forests, and sometimes in open country until in the early evening they enter Bethel.

Upon reaching the hotel the two girls go straight to their room. "Leslie, between you and me and the lamp-post, I am tired to death," says Nell throwing herself on the lounge.

"And I. I wouldn't have Mr. Lamkin know how fatiguing I find it to drive so many hours," returns Leslie, coloring and laughing.

"O the doctor's orders will keep him braced up until he gets used to it. We shall all get used to it," says Nell, sleepily. "And is that Mr—what's-his-name, that queer name, handsomer than your hero?"

"Mr. Favernel? I don't know," says Leslie unpacking her satchel. "You might not think so."

"He doesn't need to be," is Nell's remark, intended to be oracular, but dying away in the sleep which steals upon her unaware.

CHAPTER VI.

A BIT OF A BLUNDER.

"Such grace to such symmetry wed!
Quick!—notice the droop of her shoulder,
And the exquisite curve of her arm—
None ever will tell, or has told her,
How perfect she is:—There's the charm!
Such knowledge brings nothing but harm."

—MRS. M. F. PRESTON.

WHEN Leslie and Nell enter the dining room, the following morning, Miss Cobb and Mr. Lamkin are already seated at breakfast.

"I don't believe you saw the sun rise," remarks the former, looking up at Leslie with lingering, loving admiration.

"I don't believe we did," responds Nell, grimacing as she moves her shoulder uncomfortably. "Rheumatic old folks don't care for sunrises."

"Rheumatism?" queries Mr. Lamkin with interest. "Now it is strange, but I never have rheumatism."

"How nice," sighs Nell, sinking into the seat beside him.

"Now you know Nell, diet has everything to do with it. Allow me to order your breakfast. Do now, to please me," urges Mr. Lamkin.

Nell surveys the dishes about the invalid's plate with great disfavor. Graham mush, gems, etc.,

down the whole list of approved fare for dyspeptics constitute the meal.

"No thank you; I require something beside oats," she rejoins.

"Now, think a minute," persists Mr. Lamkin, "are you sure you haven't a sensation of aching in the pit of your stomach?"

"I'm sure I *have*," returns Nell. "I have it three times three hundred and sixty-five times a year. It is an aching void. I've cured it lots of times with beefsteak and I'm going to do it again."

"But Nell," says Mr. Lamkin earnestly, "rheumatism is a disease of the blood; you—"

"Eustace Lamkin, if you say another word about my blood I'll go to another table. Miss Cobb, aren't you here to protect us from the advances of this young man?"

Miss Cobb is laughing heartily. She passes a small metal owl to Mr. Lamkin.

"Didn't you say that you always eat a little red pepper on your food?" she says, suggestively.

The young man thanks her earnestly. "You are right, I had nearly forgotten. Missionary work in the matter of diet is as thankless as it is absorbing. It is more sensible to talk about the weather or any other subject of general interest. As I was just saying to Nell's peddler friend—"

"*What!*" interrupts Nell, so explosively that the persons at the neighboring table all look up with one accord. "What did you say, Eustace?"

"I didn't say anything; you didn't give me a chance," returns Mr. Lamkin testily.

"So that young man is here," says Nell, looking into space. "I believe there is something supernatural about him. Leslie why don't you say something? How can you decide whether you will have cutlets or steak, when you know that your fate is somewhere about this hotel, liable to be off out of reach, at any moment?"

Leslie raises her expressive eyebrows. "I don't know that I can do anything about it;" she replies, "I believe it isn't customary to button-hole strange young men, no matter how interested one may be in them."

"It was here he met his friend," volunteers Mr. Lamkin.

"Eustace—friend of my childhood! What kind of a looking man?" asks Nell, promptly.

"I can't tell, only having seen his back," responds Mr. Lamkin gruffly, and the waiter coming for Nell's order at this moment, the subject is dropped. Probably it would gratify her to know that at this very moment the interesting stranger is mentioning his encounter with the carriage party, to his pedestrian friend, as the two stand together on the piazza of the hotel.

The "hero" is a rather slight young man, somewhat above the medium height, with sleepy, blue eyes, and a carefully tended moustache. His regular features and even white teeth, make him quite good looking enough for the romantic *rôle* which

Leslie and Nell have assigned him. His friend is striking in appearance if only on account of his splendid physique. His face is partly concealed by a short, brown beard and moustache, and his large gray eyes with their long lashes, look back from the distant mountains as his friend concludes his narration.

"They are stopping here," continues the hero, "I saw the young man this morning. Now I suppose nothing would afford you so much gratification as to make the acquaintance of those two young ladies?"

The smile with which he makes this suggestion, proves that the speaker is not surprised at the ungracious exclamation that greets it.

"I shall begin to think you have been crossed in love, Douglas," he pursues, looking into his friend's face with a certain admiring affection.

Douglas Favernel taps his cigar against the piazza railing, and watches the ashes fall.

"So I have," is his curt rejoinder.

"I understand you, but a brother's love—I wish old fellow, you wouldn't mind so much—where is Frank now?"

"Abroad somewhere."

There is a little silence, then Favernel straightens up and seats himself on the railing, a half-smile on his lips.

"I went to a party last week, Tom," he says carelessly.

His friend falls back over a chair, like one who has suffered a shock.

"Break it to me gently," he murmurs, pressing both hands to his heart.

Favernel's smile becomes pronounced. "I did, upon my word. The sacrifice took place while I was visiting the cousin I mentioned to you last night. She had an invitation to attend a lawn party—brutal time of year for a lawn party, but she was as delighted as possible—and she took it for granted that I should go with her. I didn't want to go—"

Here Tom's hearty laugh interrupts. "Don't use superfluous language, Douglas."

Mr. Favernel clasps his hands around his knee. "Well, there proved to be no help for it; she couldn't or wouldn't go without me, and of course I couldn't deprive her of her party. There is no particular point to the story," he adds.

"Plenty of point, my dear fellow," laughs the hero, who, for some reason, seems to take a particular delight in his friend's account. "How did you enjoy yourself? Did you dance?"

"Did I! The hostess walked me up to five hundred or less young ladies. I was as wax in that determined woman's hands. How do you suppose it is, Laible," Favernel asks, in the serious tone of one really thirsting for knowledge, "that women can remember a man's face, having seen it only once, out doors, on a dark night?"

"Give it up; ask me another," replies Laible, tossing away the end of his cigar, and refusing a fresh one from his friend's proffered case.

"Every one of those five hundred or less young women did remember me," continues Favernel, meditatively, as he restores his cigar case to his pocket, "and during the following days that I spent in that town, I did nothing but lift my hat from the minute I left the house until I entered it again."

"And I can imagine just how ungraciously you did it," says Laible; "you must remember that you are somebody in particular, with a bank account; then, besides, a man who has the reputation of being a society hater is never forgotten."

Here, with an exclamation, Laible springs to his feet. "Behold my young ladies," he says softly, as Leslie and Nell come out upon the piazza. "Wake up, Favernel; isn't that blonde perfect?"

Favernel, still abstracted among his wrongs of the week before, turns indifferently at Tom's earnest words, to look in the direction of the young ladies. Simultaneously with his movement Leslie turns toward him, and their eyes meet. A surprised color steals into the girl's face. Like a delicate sun-lit flower she looks to the "hero," as she stands in her soft brown dress, swayed toward a welcome home face, for her father has never repeated to her the story of Frank Favernel's twin brother, and she does not doubt that the blue-shirted man standing before her is the caller with whom she spent so pleasant an evening a few weeks ago.

For a moment she hesitates what to do. She sees that he makes no effort to obtrude his slight acquaintance upon her. Only a moment she waits,

then advances to him with a bright cordiality in her lovely face.

"What a surprise this is, Mr. Favernel," she says gaily, offering her hand.

Favernel starts to his feet, and Tom Laible blesses the lucky fate that acquainted his friend with this young beauty, as he squares himself for an impending introduction.

"I'm delighted, I'm sure," stammers Favernel; "this is indeed a surprise." Here he receives a suggestive look from his friend. "Very much so—ahem!"

Miss Valentine stares at this odd behavior, but Leslie, engrossed in the thought of Nell's pleasure at the happening, does not immediately notice that anything is wrong. She presents Favernel to her friend, and the hero, who begins to consider it high time that he should be included in these social amenities, takes this opportunity to give Douglas a peremptory frown. The only satisfaction he receives is a glance from the victim, of mingled bewilderment and despair, which at any other time would convulse him.

~ Poor Favernel grows hot and cold by turns. He cudgels his brains until they threaten to evaporate, but with no effect. Suddenly a ray of light gleams upon him. Although he finds it impossible to recall the name of this gracious blonde, he has learned that of her friend, so to Miss Valentine, Laible is introduced in due form. Then follows another of the awkward pauses for which this jerky interview is

becoming remarkable. Nell glances quickly from Favernel to Leslie.

"Was ever such a stupid man known?" she thinks, and in another moment has determined to take the matter into her own hands.

"Mr. Laible, this is the mistress of Fairylands," she says.

"I can easily believe it," says Tom, bowing, "but may I not know the sublunary title by which mortals address her?"

"My name is Leslie Forrest," says the girl, her cheeks aflame, "and I am trying to discover whether it is you or I of whom Mr. Favernel is ashamed."

"The pleasure of this meeting has partially stunned my friend, Miss Forrest," says Laible. "A lady must always forgive a bashful man. Have you noticed the view one can get just around the corner of the piazza?" he continues. "I should like to show it to you," and Favernel is gloomily envious of the air with which his friend leads Miss Forrest away.

Nell's sentiments are hardly more cheerful. An unreasonable, miserable pang darts through her as she looks after the couple, but she recalls herself sharply. What right has a little, dark creature like herself to be jealous of Leslie! Then she attempts conversation with Favernel, and although her loquacity receives slight encouragement from its taciturn object, it has the good effect of diverting herself, so that when Leslie and her escort return around the corner of the hotel, chatting gayly, she can look at

them without any unpleasant contraction of the heart.

It is a relief to her when Miss Cobb's figure appears at a window and beckons. The young ladies excuse themselves and go indoors. Tom Laible joins his friend, shaking his head seriously.

"Your manners need a great deal more polishing, Douglas. That party wasn't enough."

"It appears that it was, quite enough," returns Favernel, savagely.

"How is that?"

"Can't you see into this mill stone? Miss Forrest must be one of the young ladies I met at that blessed party."

"The deuce!"

"A nice position to be put in. I believe I've lost ten pounds in the ordeal. I couldn't introduce you to her because I couldn't remember her name or face or anything about her. Is that sufficient reason?"

Laible does not reply directly to this lofty sarcasm.

"But how sincerely pleased she seemed to see you. Oh, that Fortunatus purse of yours! What doesn't it accomplish?"

"Nonsense! It couldn't have accomplished that. She is an heiress. Her little friend there told me as much."

"Aha! Then I must fall in love with her. I am too high-minded to marry a woman for her money alone."

"There will be no trouble about that," returns Favernel contemptuously. "You can fall in love with the ease induced by long practice. But what are we thinking of?" he adds suddenly, a hunted expression in his eyes. "Let us get out of this place before those ladies reappear. My only safety is in flight. I'll go in and pay the bill and we'll start."

"Not a bit of it," says the younger man. "Anyway you are too late. There they come."

This time Leslie meets Favernel with dignity. She has been deeply hurt by the manner in which her advances were met; but since the young men are directly in her path she is obliged to introduce them to Miss Cobb, and then Mr. Lamkin steps forward.

"Mr. Favernel," she says coldly, "this is Mr. Lamkin, whom I can scarcely expect you to remember having met at Fairylands."

Favernel bows, a slow look of horror gathering over his face, and while Mr. Lamkin is settling his party in the carriage, he draws his friend into the hotel office.

"Laible," he says in a low voice, "did you hear that? That girl is a *lunatic*!"

He utters the last word in a horrified undertone.

"Well, humor her, humor her. Always humor lunatics, especially pretty ones," says Laible, lightly.

"Did you hear her say I had been to fairy

land? Evidently that is her mania. Here Tom," handing a roll of bills from his pocket, "you pay the bill, and the instant their carriage starts, we will put off in another direction, and I hope the world is large enough to permit us never to meet them again."

"Pshaw!" exclaims Laible taking the money, "you carry this thing too far. If it is true that the pretty heiress is a little touched in the upper story, it is clearly our duty to help Miss Valentine in the work of diverting her."

Having paid the bill he returns to the attack.

"Come, Favernel," he begs, "don't back out of this thing."

"You go, if you like," returns the other stubbornly; "but I am not going to endure so painful a sight any longer."

"Hear the man! He calls Miss Forrest a painful sight!" exclaims Laible, when Mr. Lamkin suddenly appears before their window and beckons.

"There, Favernel, he wants you."

"No, he wants *you*," exclaims Douglas, stepping back.

"Nonsense," says Laible, "go ahead. He wants you, as the old and tried friend of Miss Forrest.

Favernel growls but goes, and Tom follows with a most unsympathetic smile on his countenance.

Mr. Lamkin meets them at the door and addresses Favernel.

"I thought if you were intending to set out this

morning, we might start together, socially, if you are so inclined."

By what maneuvers Twinkle has managed that this invitation shall be given will never be known.

Favernel replies hastily.

"You are very kind, but Mr. Laible and myself had just come to the conclusion—"

"That we should enjoy nothing better," interrupts Tom. "We are at your service, sir."

Miserably Favernel follows his determined friend, who talks gaily to the occupants of the carriage as Mr. Lamkin starts the horse slowly.

"Is this Mr. Favernel an old friend of yours?" asks Miss Cobb, softly, of Leslie, who is occupying the seat beside her.

"Not at all," replies the girl, with a scornful glance out at the taller of the two pedestrians. "He is a friend of my father's. He is engaged to my father's ward."

Miss Cobb heaves a sigh of relief.

"I have dropped my fan!" exclaims Leslie, "Mr. Laible will you be so kind—" but it is Favernel who darts around behind the carriage, and carefully wiping the dust from the fan, restores it to its owner with an air of so much deference and so earnest and awed an expression in his eyes that the girl is somewhat mollified. "If we could see a ridge of mountains like that ahead of us from Fairylands, it would be quite complete, wouldn't it, Mr. Favernel?" she asks.

Favernel starts and gives her a side-long glance.

"Humor her, humor her," mutters Tom.

"O, yes—yes—quite the finishing touch," says Favernel, then gives a stealthy look at the others of the party expecting at least an expressive glance in recognition of his presence of mind. To his surprise they are all calmly indifferent.

"Too used to it, I suppose to notice it, poor thing," he thinks.

"You didn't tell me you thought of coming to the mountains," continued Leslie.

"I—I saw you so short a time, I hardly thought it would interest you," hesitates Favernel.

Leslie stares at him with a puzzled frown. His embarrassment is incomprehensible.

"See that pretty cultivated island, Mr. Favernel?" she says, again after a few minutes. "Doesn't that look a little like Fairylands, the river is so like glass?"

"Why," wonders the wretched man, "does she never ask Tom's opinion of fairy land?"

Now, however, the horses begin to give evidence of impatience at being restrained, and Favernel welcomes the diversion.

"This can not be a very agreeable arrangement for you," he says, addressing the driver. "Let the horses go. Do not wait longer for us."

This last is an earnest appeal in spite of muttered interruptions from Tom who, having been kept amused by Nell's sallies, considers the present arrangement an admirable one.

"I believe we shall have to leave you," says Mr. Lamkin, "we shall go as far as Upton to-day. I suppose you—" but whatever Mr. Lamkin supposes is lost on the pedestrians, as the horses start forward. Leslie and Nell lean from the carriage and bow farewells which are both aimed at the hero, with not a regret for his taciturn, ill-at-ease companion.

The pedestrians raise their hats.

"I breathe again," says Favernel.

"Well if you don't exert yourself to be a little more agreeable than you have been, I shall wish I had acted as postillion to that carriage party," says Tom. "What is the matter with you?"

"The matter is that I would rather stand at the mouth of a loaded cannon, than have Miss Forrest turn those exquisite eyes of hers on me."

"Saints defend us! That is the first time I ever heard you admire a woman's eyes."

"And the last, probably. I never saw a sight that aroused my pity so keenly."

"And pity, you know, is akin to the other thing," adds his friend.

"Don't joke, Tom. It fairly makes my flesh creep to have her look at me in that trusting way and then talk about fairy land."

"Perhaps she takes you for that remarkable twin brother of yours, after all."

Favernel shakes his head. "It is some years since we have been taken for one another; then beside, she speaks of having seen me recently and

they tell me, somebody told me, that Frank is still abroad."

"This is not my first meeting with that unfortunate beauty," says Laible after they have tramped along a few minutes in silence,—“not long ago I rode several miles with her in the cars."

"You did? How did she behave?"

"Like anyone else; but a gentleman brought her to the train, and I recollect that he said—‘I don't know as we do right to let you go alone.’"

"No wonder," says Favernel indignantly. "What careless friends the poor creature has!"

"Poor creature!" repeats Tom. "That sounds strange in such a connection. If ever a bright, unclouded intellect seemed to shine out in a beautiful face, it does there."

"Yes; but that is often the way. Probably she is perfectly sane on most points, although if so, why should she wonder that I did not tell her I was coming to the mountains? I don't suppose I was with her more than ten minutes."

"All the more flattering," says Tom.

"Don't speak that way, Laible; it seems sacrilegious. I believe, although it was a relief to have them go, I should feel sorry never to see that girl again. It seems as though judicious treatment must do something for her—as if she could be restored."

"That is the spirit, Favernel; at last you speak like a sensible man. I have a plan to propose, which, if it meets your approbation will enable us to accompany the interesting party as far, and as long as we like."

CHAPTER VII.

BY UMBAGOG.

"A nameless longing filled her breast,
A wish that she hardly dared to own,
For something better than she had known."

—J. G. WHITTIER.

NO longer obliged to be content with distant grandeur, the carriage party are among the majestic hills at last.

They have passed through one of the notches, and coming to a particularly picturesque spot, have left the carriage, to walk about and enjoy the scene at greater length.

"How glad you must be Leslie," says Nell, "that you persisted in saving your adjectives yesterday and the day before."

Leslie shakes her head silently.

"Exactly," continues Nell. "It is the fate of the miser; you saved them until too late. This scene baffles adjectives. You point a moral very strikingly, my dear."

At their feet, a deep ravine separates the road from the mountains beyond. In its depths flows a rushing river, breaking over rocks and logs, while down the sides of the distant mountains run streams whose silvery waterfalls catch the sunlight, and deepen the darkness of the firs.

Mr. Lamkin improves the opportunity to take a small pill.

Miss Cobb walks slowly down the road, enjoying the view in her own mute fashion.

Suddenly, in the great stillness of the place a distant sound of horses' hoofs is heard.

Nell lifts her head instantly.

"Sister Ann, sister Ann, do you see anything?" she cries.

Leslie looks, and without any warning cloud of dust, two horsemen appear, coming at a great pace along the narrow road. Their horses' sides are wet.

As soon as they see that they are recognized, Tom Laible swings his hat, and galloping on, just reins in his horse as it passes Leslie.

"Do you know that is the second time that you have nearly run over me, Mr. Laible?" she asks. "The first time was just outside Fairylands. Do you remember me now?"

The gay expression fades from the young man's face. He stammers some reply, and feigns to be occupied with his horse, who sidles across the road.

Leslie has hardly time to wonder at the slight attention paid to her question, for Favernel, who comes up a little behind his friend, leaps off his horse at her side.

The girl reddens and draws back.

"You startled me," she says.

"And you frightened me," he returns, mentally

anathematizing the carelessness displayed by Leslie's guardians in permitting her thus to stand alone on the brink of a ravine.

Miss Valentine welcomes Laible with a very good air of nonchalance.

"A bright idea of mine, wasn't it, to turn our walk into a ride," he says, as he approaches her.

"Very; but will those tired horses carry you far?"

"No, they are not very good animals, we shall send them back when we reach Upton, and get some others somewhere."

"How delightfully independent gentlemen can be," says Nell, "especially when they have money," she adds bluntly.

"Or have a moneyed friend," suggests Tom, coolly. "I furnish ideas, and Mr. Favernel furnishes unlimited ducats."

"Is he so rich, then?"

"Yes; and all within a few years."

"Why, he has hardly had time to get used to it," says Nell; "how happy he must be!"

"He is not happy, at all," returns Tom, marveling at the cupidity of women, as manifested in Miss Valentine's tone, "for when he gained his fortune, he lost his brother, or rather his brother's friendship—much the same thing—a small matter, compared with the fortune, you think perhaps."

"Perhaps," assents Nell, "that depends entirely upon what sort of person the brother is."

Here Leslie approaches, quite unconscious that

Nell would prefer her to keep away. She has discovered that so long as she remains near the ravine, no matter how much she moves about, Favernel follows her like her shadow, and at the first opportunity she escapes from the persistent espionage, leaving Douglas to frown down upon the rocks below and to wonder whether he has been wise or foolish to fall in with Tom's suggestion.

"Had we not better move on?" suggests Mr. Lamkin. "It would be well to be under cover before evening. I declare, I don't like the idea of going down that hill," he continues ruefully, gazing at the steep decline with its loose stones.

Mr. Favernel turns quickly around.

"Mount my horse, if you would like the change, Mr. Lamkin. Let me drive in your place awhile?"

"A thousand thanks," returns the invalid, promptly; "now I take that very kindly. I suppose my physician knew what he was about when he sent me on this trip, but I find it very fatiguing business—very."

So it is arranged. Leslie finds herself next Mr. Favernel, on the front seat of the carriage, and the cavalcade moves on. Miss Forrest can be disagreeable when she tries, and she does try during the following hour, but with no effect. The more acid the replies that she vouchsafes to her companion's remarks on the scenery, or the climate, or any other of the safe topics upon which he ventures, the more kind becomes his voice, the more pronounced his glances of—if Leslie can believe it—compassion.

He redoubles his attention to her comfort, becomes more talkative, tells her anecdotes.

Tom Laible stops occasionally in the animated conversation he is keeping up with Nell, to send long looks of amazement in the direction of his friend.

"Miss Forrest must be an enchantress," he says at last. "She is the first lady I ever saw Mr. Favernel talk to, although I have seen plenty talk to him."

As to Leslie herself, she decides that Douglas Favernel is the strangest combination she has ever known. So ill-mannered this morning, so sweet-tempered this afternoon, she can not comprehend him.

A half an hour before reaching Upton, Mr. Favernel changes places again with Mr. Lamkin, the latter gladly acquiescing in the proposition that Mr. Favernel shall ride ahead, order dinner, and secure rooms for the party, and when the carriage load alight at the hotel, Tom Laible is on the piazza to meet them.

"Dinner will not be ready for an hour," he says, "and you all ought to lie down until then."

"I certainly shall for one," returns Mr. Lamkin, "and I should have been *laible* to do so without any suggestion; see the point?" and highly pleased with his own wit, he goes into the house preceded by Miss Cobb and Leslie.

"That is over," says Tom to Nell, fanning himself with his hat, "I am so relieved! I am always

expecting it until it does fall, and then I can be at rest again."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that pun on my name. Everybody is sure to make it, in time, and everybody is equally sure that it never before was conceived by mortal. The agony I have endured getting up hollow sepulchral laughs over it would move a heart of stone! Sometimes I think I will go to Congress and get my name changed to Smith or Jones."

Nell smiles. "I am relieved," she says, "to find Mr. Lamkin so frisky. Do let him pun if it will help to keep him up until this drive is over. I never before realized my blessing in owning a name that is exempt from having such liberties taken with it."

"Yours? Why yours is worse than mine I should say."

"Ah, but you don't realize. It is playing with fire to pun on my name."

"Sure enough, a fellow would commit himself decidedly by asking you to be his Valentine."

"Yes. Think of paying for the pleasure of a moment with a life-long bondage!"

"Miss Valentine, there are hosts of appropriate things that might be said about a happy slave right there, but I have no right to detain you here to listen to pretty speeches," says Laible, looking down on the red roses and the little brown hand that replaces the eyeglasses. "Ought you not to go in and rest before dinner?"

"O no, I am not tired," replies Nell, conscious that she is perhaps forcing her company on the "hero," but bent upon enjoying the hour to the utmost, before the time comes to be shut up again in Brenton.

"What do you say to a walk, then?" asks Laible. "I was about to walk down by the lake when you arrived."

"I should like it of all things!"

So they start, Nell glancing back at the hotel, and wondering if Leslie is watching from any of its windows; but Leslie is doing no such foolish thing. She is deep in "The Wooing O't," and oblivious to all heroes save the one therein contained.

"What name has this pretty lake?" asks Nell when they come upon it.

"Umbagog. Favernel says the fishing here is capital. I am almost tempted to stay and try it."

"Why don't you?" asks the girl carelessly, mentally calling down everything unpleasant upon Mr. Laible's devoted head, should he thus desert herself and Leslie.

"Perhaps we shall. It will be just as Favernel says."

"I thought this afternoon that you said you furnished the ideas."

"It was a base misrepresentation; occasionally he falls in with my suggestions, but as a general thing Favernel leads, and I follow suit."

"Well, I wouldn't say so!" speaks Nell, impulsively.

Her companion looks at her in surprise. "Why? what did I say?"

"If I were a man, I'd like to see myself follow anybody's lead," she returns; "if you wish to stay and fish in Umbagog Lake, do so, and let Mr. Favernel do as he likes."

"But that would hardly work in this case, when I am his guest, don't you understand?" says Tom, with an amused smile.

"O of course, if your motive is politeness it is highly commendable, but if it is laz—indifference, I shouldn't think you could *bear* it in yourself," and Miss Valentine's brown cheeks flush.

Mr. Laible looks at her a moment, curiously. "Here is a seat for you by the water; shall we sit down?" he asks, spreading his handkerchief over a flat rock.

"And where will you sit?" asks the girl, looking about.

"My lodging's on the cold ground,' and not for the first time either," replies the other, dropping upon the rain-wet grass.

"You'll take everything! Chills and fever, and everything else," exclaims Nell, seating herself.

"That is not so bad as the lecture you have on your tongue's end for me."

"Lecture? when I have only known you a day!"

"O that is nothing, there is something about me that invites reproach. I don't know what it is; I am a very peaceable man, but it always makes people bristle to come near me."

"I don't feel very pugilistic," laughs Nell.

"And moreover, no one is ever afraid to speak his mind to me; in a very short time, twenty-four hours at most, I am usually made acquainted with my new acquaintance's candid impression and opinion of me, and in no case has it been on the whole, favorable; yet I have struggled through twenty-seven years of life. I think I must be peculiarly constructed to bear contumely," and the young man takes off his hat to the evening breeze, and looks up at his companion with lazy good nature.

"You are so entirely different from what I thought you," observes Nell, naively.

"And what did you think me?"

"I thought you were stiff, and would be hard to get acquainted with, that first day I saw you in the cars," replies the girl confidentially."

"Saw me in the cars?" repeats Laible, in a puzzled tone.

"Of course," thinks Nell, with another of those unaccountable little miserable pangs, "he could not see me when Leslie was by"; her manner becomes cooler. "Yes, I saw you when I met Miss Forrest at Portland."

"Ah, was it you? I didn't remember. It was a little strange, was it not, for Miss Forrest's friends to allow her to perform any journey alone?" and Laible looks inquiringly into his companion's face.

"I hardly thought of it," replies Miss Valentine, "although a girl in Leslie's position, is, of course,

less often allowed to go unchaperoned than one in—mine, for instance.

“I should hope so,” replies the gentleman, quickly; and he attributes the hurt shadow that falls over Nell’s face to her sensitiveness at having her friend’s unhappy condition alluded to.

“Well, this is diverging,” he continues. “You thought I was stiff, and now you find me yielding, bending meekly to the executioner, and you hesitate to strike the first blow; why should you?”

“How can I, when I know nothing about you?” says Nell, striving to crush out of her mind the thought that her companion considers her of so far coarser material than Leslie, that what is fit for herself, should not be considered for one moment in connection with the heiress. “He belongs to Leslie’s world, not mine,” she thinks. “Can it be possible that so subtle a freemasonry exists in those circles, that, knowing nothing of either of us, he can at once separate the refinement and delicacy clinging to her, from the atmosphere of pettiness and coarseness that I can not shake off, but must breathe all my life.”

Not often do bitter thoughts obtain entrance to Nell Valentine’s mind, and bravely she fights them, sitting by the mountain lake this Summer evening, with the placidly unconscious New Yorker at her feet.

“I have said my say,” she returns at last; “and I do not know how I dared, either. It was only that I hoped you weren’t lazy.”

"Miss Valentine, I beseech you not to hope that. I should like to reform in something for you, for I make it a point to promise reformation in some line to every one who takes me in hand, but you must respect my favorite sin."

"I haven't taken you in hand," laughs Nell. "I do not want any part in such reformation as yours. You are the most comfortable sinner I ever met."

"So I am, or I should not be here to-night. I ought to be at home, and at work this minute."

"What are you when you are at home?" asks Nell.

"A hard-working lawyer. But Favernel came into the office one day, and asked me to take this trip with him, and as no one came in on the same day to offer me a thousand dollar retaining fee to stay where I was, I just 'shut up shop' and started; and now, if I may make so bold, what are you when you are at home?"

"A housekeeper," returns Nell, shortly.

"It is not possible, you are too young."

"I beg your pardon, appearances are deceptive. For more than a year I have kept house for Mrs. Lamkin, who took me in when I had not a relative in the world; and although I am not actually dependent upon her, I am grateful for my home there, for I am as poor as a church mouse. Now that I think of it, Leslie and I are ever so much like Mr. Favernel and you, for he is rich and you are—didn't you say you were—I understood that you—why I don't believe you said one word about it!" and from talk-

ing very fast and gaily, Nell becomes very hesitating and flushed.

"Your penetration is faultless, Miss Valentine. Job's turkey was a capitalist compared with me, and his possessions, I believe, consisted of one tail-feather."

"But you are a man. You can force the world to give you something more than a living; whereas I—Oh, I wish I were a man!" finishes Nell emphatically.

"It is not very easy to force more than a living out of the world in these days," says the other.

"Mr. Favernel did it."

"O no. Far from it. It is the old, old story of the rich bachelor uncle, in his case. He deserved it though. He was always an energetic, persevering sort of fellow, before this uncle died, leaving him all his property. Favernel's brother had toadied to the old gentleman, while my friend kept on in the even tenor of his way, never even going to see the uncle, or paying him any sort of attention. So the old fellow, being naturally contrary and crabbed, willed his money to Douglas, leaving his devoted nephew in the lurch, and a more disappointed, surprised man, probably never lived, than Frank Favernel, the day that the will was read. I suspect that he used very bad language to his brother, who, however, offered him half of the money, which offer, Frank in the heat of his anger refused. I rather think he has repented it at leisure since."

"Which? The bad language, or the money?"

"O the money. He hates Douglas as strongly as ever."

"What an unpleasant state of things. I don't wonder it is a great damper on Mr. Favernel's happiness."

"It is; and he is such a trump; the best fellow, I believe, that the world contains. I never saw his brother, and I never want to. Favernel does not say much, but I know the man must be contemptible. But I forget. My friend's affairs can not interest you as they do me. See what a beautiful sunset! I should like to paint it."

"What! Can you—do you paint?" asks Nell, eagerly.

"I used to think I could, but I recovered from the idea, some time ago. How still the woods are across from us! All it needs now to complete the picture is that the deer should come out of the forest, and down to the water to drink."

"Do they! Are there deer about here?" asks the girl again.

"Certainly. Did you never see deer in their wild state?"

Nell longs to burst out with the truth, that she has seen nothing, and longs to see everything; to tell this novel, congenial companion all her minor woes; to tell him about Jericho, and aunt Lamkin's poetry, but he would not only be uninterested, he might look down upon her the more, so she only shakes her head.

"I wish they would show off, then, for your bene

fit, but they never come as early as this. I think dinner must be ready by this time ; shall we return to the hotel ? ”

“ Yes ; but I could sit by this lake all night,” says Nell, rising with a sigh.

“ I should have thought you would require something beside a scenery diet after your long drive. You must remember we are not in Miss Forrest’s dear fairy land,” and Tom takes another quick glance at his companion. He wishes he could induce her to talk freely of the beautiful heiress, although he respects her reticence.

“ Indeed I am not apt to forget it,” says Nell. “ What a happy girl Miss Forrest is, always to have the thought of that to fall back upon.”

“ She really does then take comfort out of it ? ” asks Tom. Nell looks at him in surprise.

“ Why of course she does ; the thought of it seems scarcely ever out of her mind. I think no one was ever more devotedly attached to a place, than Leslie is to Fairylands.”

“ Then you think it would be cruel as well as useless for any one to try to get her to abandon it in favor of attractions more of the earth, earthy.”

Pang number three sends the blood to Miss Valentine’s face. “ There is no telling how long he has been in love with her ” she thinks, “ and now he asks my opinion, of whether or no Leslie would give up her home for that which he could offer.”

“ I would not take the responsibility of saying, Mr. Laible,” she replies, and her companion questions her no further.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHEERING MR. LAMKIN.

"Nay, lady, one frown is enough
In a life so soon over as this—
And though minutes seem long in a huff,
They're minutes 'tis pity to miss."—N. P. WILLIS.

THE following morning after breakfast, Leslie is in her room putting on her hat preparatory to start, when Nell bounces in without ceremony.

"O, Leslie, that blessed Gruff-and-Glum. What do you suppose he has done now?"

"Tell on," says Leslie, snapping the fastenings of her hand bag.

"Chartered an adorable little steamer to take us to Errol Dam, where our horses are to meet us. O, you good girl, to have such a Croesus of a friend."

"Who says he is a Croesus?"

"Mr. Laible," responds Nell, standing on tip-toe to get a good view over Leslie's shoulder into the mirror, as she does some quick, mysterious thing to her "bangs" which heightens their becomingness.

"Don't thank me. He makes none of these exertions on my account."

"Why, Leslie, you know better. *My* how he looks at you!"

"What a proof," laughs Leslie.

"I know it is just to please you that he took this steamer. You should have heard him talk to Mr. Lamkin—asking him if Miss Forrest was timid on the water, or if you would enjoy it, and so on *ad infinitum*. I settled that directly, when I found you were all that stood in the way of our going. I told him you were born at sea, and never happy except on the water. *Do* come on."

At this exhortation Leslie does come on, following Nell until they join the group on the lake shore. Favernel advances, the veiled eagerness in his eyes questioning Leslie's approval of his plan.

"You are our good genius, Mr. Favernel," she says, with a pleased look at the miniature steamer, puffing away near by.

"Of course," assents Laible ; "Favernel is a great acquisition. Children cry for him ; no family should be without him."

Mr. Lamkin looks in some dismay at the impromptu wharf formed by a narrow plank thrown across floating logs.

"It will be very nice—delightful, after we get started," he says, "but I am so giddy-headed that really—"

"Why, you giddy, young thing," cries Nell, running across the plank and nodding back from the steamer's deck.

Leslie, smiling and sure-footed, comes next, closely followed by Favernel, who watches her every movement until the transit is accomplished ; then as Mr.

Lamkin is still trotting up and down the shore in a state of uncertainty, Favernel goes back and, lifting him as if he were a feather-weight, sets him down safely on the deck.

"Shall I do the same for you, Miss Cobb?" inquires Mr. Laible.

"No; but if you only had a coat-tail now!" she says, with a regretful look at the brevity of the young man's sack-coat.

"Won't an umbrella do just as well?" and that article being produced, Mr. Laible, holding one end, offers the other to Miss Cobb, who grasps it in the most matter-of-fact way, and thus teters safely over.

The steamer moves off across the lake in the bracing mountain air, the hills, trees, and occasional wooded islands being faithfully reflected in the glassy water.

Mr. Lamkin studies his written directions and takes a powder.

Tom Laible, standing near Miss Cobb, regards the invalid with great disfavor.

"Miss Cobb, I don't quite understand your party," he says, confidentially.

"It isn't necessary that you should," is the reply.

"Right between the eyes," murmurs Tom. "No. Come, Miss Cobb, what a queer selection your manly protector is."

"Pooh!" snorts Miss Dorothy. "Protector!"

"Well, that's what I say," reiterates Laible.

"He'll do well enough," says Miss Cobb, indifferently. "It's as well to have a figure-head in pantaloons with us; but I'm capable of driving those horses over the route we've laid out, so I don't worry."

Laible laughs. He particularly likes the odd mixture of reserve and bluntness which he finds in the chaperone. From this he turns to watching Favernel's assiduous care for Leslie's comfort and the eagerness with which he listens for her expressions of pleasure and approval.

Miss Valentine is perched on the highest seat the boat affords. Leslie looks up at her.

"This does cast Fairylands in the shade," she calls, then turns to address some remark to Douglas; but the words die on her lips. She rises and walks away. What right has he to regard her with so perplexed and pained an expression. Persons who are so moody and changeable as this man are bores, she tells herself, and is glad when the ride is finished and she is beside Miss Cobb on the back seat of the carriage.

Driving and riding as on the previous day, it is not until the party dismount in Dixville Notch, that Favernel has another opportunity to speak to Leslie; and when he endeavors to do so, she avoids him. Troubled at this discovery, the young man approaches Nell, who is standing by a rushing brook, one bank of which is a mountain.

"Look, Mr. Favernel," she says, "as high up as you can see, the mountain-side is covered with that

beautiful moss, and these logs across the brook are velvety with it. How lovely!"

"Yes," assents Favernel, absently. Miss Valentine is an ordinary young lady. He has hardly spoken to her before, but he forgets that now. He stands twisting his mustache, his grave face graver than usual.

"I am afraid Miss Forrest is offended with me," he says abruptly.

Nell looks up in surprise. "What a queer thing for Gruff-and-Glum to come to me with!" is her mental comment.

"I'm sorry," she replies with a little mocking ring in her tone.

"What do you think I may have done? What are her sensitive points?" inquires Favernel—"Precisely," thinks Nell, "as though Leslie's sensitive points were not those of any other nice girl."

"I don't know, perhaps you stare at her too much," she answers bluntly.

"Do I stare at her—noticeably you know?" asks Favernel, seriously.

"I should say so—atrociously," replies Nell.

"Thank you for telling me. I will avoid it in future; but you see I am so interested in her," explains the young man with more warmth.

"O yes, I see it, I imagine everybody sees it," remarks Miss Valentine.

The mountain streams are distinctly heard rushing beneath the ground they stand on. Nell looks over her shoulder to find Laible. He is talking to

Mr. Lamkin, and picking up the snow which lies thickly in crevices by the road-side.

"Snow in June! think of it," observes Nell. "The idea of killing mosquitoes with one hand and holding snow in the other!" At the same time she is wondering how Leslie can be left alone to make such a pretty picture of herself against the mossy background. "Why doesn't Mr. Laible go and talk to her?" All the same there is an odd little thrill of satisfaction down deep in her heart that Mr. Laible does not go and talk to Leslie. Favernel turns thoughtfully away, and during the remainder of the day, Leslie is freed from the pertinacious gaze, while the gentleman makes up for his abstinence by resolving at last to make a personal effort to banish the cloud which casts its fantastic shadows across her mind. The brown study into which he falls, lasts for the remainder of the afternoon; and were it not for Miss Valentine and Tom Laible, it would be a quiet party that moves along the foot of the granite-topped mountains, among the boulders that lie here and there at the base. But the next morning a fresh spirit comes with the fresh day. The party leave Colebrook and cross the river to Vermont. The green hills rise about them, the sunlight lying in patches on their sides while their tops are lost in mist.

Mr. Lamkin alone appears gloomy. Evidently something in his inner man is not behaving properly. Leslie with considerable contrition, questions him, but finding herself snubbed discontinues the effort.

"You have a better color, Mr. Lamkin, than the day we started, I can see that," remarks Miss Cobb, with a good-natured attempt at encouragement.

"And I," adds Nell, earnestly, "yes, indeed. Don't you notice it, Mr. Laible?" she asks, leaning out of the carriage and nodding and frowning at that gentleman significantly. "O yes—yes," returns Tom, drawing nearer. "I've often noticed it. What is it?"

"Mr. Lamkin's color, you know," frowns Nell with still more meaning a glance at the back of the driver's head.

"Charming color—yes," drawls Tom, "kind of a mezzo-tint. What's the matter?" he adds in an undertone, but Miss Valentine leans back with a bounce and does not deign an answer.

Mr. Lamkin glooms at the horses and makes no remark. Leslie looks anxiously at him, with side-long glances, and laughs, a little tearfully.

"Hello!" exclaims Tom, "there's a deserted hotel, with grove, bowling alley, rustic seats, and all complete."

"What a lonely place," says Leslie, with a shiver. "I shouldn't like to come here in the evening."

"Why not?" asks Laible. "For my part I think of leasing this hotel of the owls, and making my fortune this season. Fate has probably led me here for no other purpose."

"I think fate has led us here to eat our lunch," observes Miss Cobb; "it is an excellent place for the purpose."

"And I think it is intended as a refuge from a shower," says Favernel, looking over his shoulder at the sky. Mr. Lamkin nearly jumps off the seat at the flash and clap of thunder, which gives force to these words, and there is a small scream from Miss Cobb, after which she endeavors to look extremely stern and strong-minded.

"Never mind, Miss Cobb, so long as our luncheon wasn't struck," says Tom. "I had not thought to entertain my friends so soon in my new abode," he continues, "but I am happy to invite you to a spread in my bowling alley," and so saying, he leaves Favernel to tie the horses, and leads the way to a long, low building, which stands apart from the dreary hotel, and pushing open the door already ajar, ushers them all in, just as the torrents fall.

A few battered chairs stand about, and the dim light struggles in through dingy windows.

Leslie is standing by one of the latter watching Favernel's care of the horses and carriage, while the rain descends in sheets upon his devoted head.

Nell joins her. "Isn't this a lark, Leslie?"

"Not much of a one for Mr. Favernel, I'm afraid."

"Yes. Isn't he good!" assents Nell, "and handsome! He has lost five years of his age with that beard. When did he have it shaved off?"

"Last night, I believe."

"Leslie Forrest," says Nell, slowly, "if I were Miss Appleton I shouldn't like it."

"Why? I think it is an immense improvement,"

says Leslie, demurely. "His moustache is very becoming, and his chin is too handsome to cover up."

"You know very well that isn't what I mean," returns Nell. "Just as I was leaving the piazza last night I heard you say you didn't like beards, and this morning there was that square-shouldered giant sitting beside you at breakfast, looking far handsomer than is safe, and so changed I didn't know him at first. Now what do you think of that?"

"I think you didn't look very closely, or you would have recognized him at once," replies Leslie, provokingly.

The entrance, dripping wet, of the subject of conversation prevents Nell's retort.

Mr. Lamkin trips out from the corner, where he has been sitting alone.

"I can not express my thanks to you, Mr. Faverne! If I had been obliged to remain out in the wet, I don't know what the consequences might have been," he says.

Douglas, shaking himself in the middle of the floor and slapping the water from his sleeves and pantaloons, nods down at him pleasantly.

"Don't mention it."

"Thank him," Nell suggests to her friend in an earnest undertone.

"He doesn't want to be thanked. Cousin Dorothy is doing it now."

"He! he doesn't care for that; he only cares for what you say."

Leslie turns sharply upon the speaker. "Twinkle, I don't want you to say such things any more. In the first place, Mr. Favernel is engaged, which is enough; and in the second place he seems to be afraid of me for some reason, and that precludes the idea of his admiring me. Now remember."

With a reproachful glance, Nell turns away.

"Twinkle, Twinkle, dear!" Leslie follows and catches her; "forgive me."

Mr. Laible comes up.

"Are you out of her good graces too, Miss Forrest?" he asks. "What have you done? She's savage with me just because I didn't know what she wanted me to say about Mr. Lamkin's complexion. I haven't been able to get anything from her since, except such looks as men go miles to avoid."

Nell receives this with a toss of her head, and walks across to one of the battered chairs.

Laible follows her.

"I wish you would explain, really," he says, coaxingly. "Were you trying to compliment his improved health?"

"Yes, we were. How bright you are," says Nell, with exaggerated and fleeting admiration, immediately settling down again into solemnity.

"Ah, that was the idea—to chirk up the Lamkin," says Tom, meditatively, looking across at the invalid. "Perhaps it can be done yet. I have an idea."

Nell continues to look into space, unmoved by this news.

"What is his favorite ailment, Miss Valentine?"

"Dyspepsia," utters Nell.

"If I make him cheerful and beaming for the rest of the day, do you think I may be forgiven the density of my cerebral structure?"

Nell smiles encouragement.

"Then farewell!" exclaims Tom, dramatically. "I go. May I ask a reward upon my return from this perilous undertaking?"

"To the half of my kingdom," promises Nell.

"Then do have lunch ready, for I am hungry as a wolf," is the practical supplication.

When Laible returns, he finds all but Mr. Lamkin gathered about the bench upon which is spread the contents of the hamper.

"I have discovered the attraction here—what originally made the place," he announces, taking his seat.

Nell levels her eyeglasses at him expectantly.

Mr. Lamkin stands, one hand on his hip, eyeing the food with disapproval.

"There is no room for doubt that this was originally a great health resort."

Mr. Lamkin transfers his attention from the hard boiled eggs to the speaker.

"How is that?" he inquires with interest.

"There are some fine mineral springs outside," says Tom, with a backward motion of the head.

"Too efficacious. They seem to have killed off all who once inhabited here," says Favernel.

"O, no! That's easily understood. The place

has had its day. These things are governed by fashion after all. After a certain number of seasons, some other springs, more talked about, drew off the visitors. There's a weather-worn wooden slab out there which states that these waters are especially efficacious—please pass the salt, Miss Cobb—in cases of—Mr. Lamkin will you kindly toss me that napkin—of dyspepsia."

Mr. Lamkin drops the napkin.

"Just point the spot out to me, Mr. Laible. Don't rise, just tell me—"

"Don't mention it. It's no trouble," returns Tom, going to the window. "Right there where those rustic seats are placed in a circle."

"Thank you, thank you. Will you lend me a cup? These ladies brought nothing that a Christian can drink out of"—so, bustling and eager, Mr. Lamkin hurries out the door.

"Now, Mr. Laible," says Nell, as he comes gravely back to his place.

"Yes, Miss Valentine."

"Is there really a spring?"

"Wait till our friend returns," replies Tom with a magnificent air.

"I've often wondered," says Miss Cobb, musingly, "who keeps all the patent medicines going; but I suppose now it is just such as he."

Leslie is not sure whether she likes the "hero" thus to make game of one of her party. His attitude to herself has been so distant and formal ever since their meeting, that this action seems presuming.

She is about to resent it in words, when the invalid comes in, beaming.

"I am inclined to take your view of the case, quite, Mr. Laible," he says; "there's power in that water; it really tastes very bad, very. I believe I shall dare to eat something, after all," and as Mr. Lamkin draws up to the improvised table, Mr. Laible gives Nell a long, impressive look.

"There now," says Miss Cobb, good-naturedly. "It was for Mr. Lamkin's sake we were led here after all. Do eat, it will do you good. Here's your red pepper," producing it from unexplored depths of a basket; "don't scald yourself with any more of it than you have to."

"Well now, I am pleased," pursues Mr. Lamkin, "that has really a very penetrating, disagreeable taste; for dyspepsia, too! How wonderfully fortunate."

Laible looks across again at Nell.

"I'm greatly obliged to you, Mr. Laible, for the discovery."

"Not at all. Why shouldn't you carry some of the water along with you?"

"I've been thinking of that, but how is it to be done?"

"There are plenty of empty bottles outside lying about. Don't disturb yourself," says Tom, "finish your luncheon. The sun has come out, and perhaps Miss Valentine will assist me."

"Why yes, you might, Nell," says Mr. Lamkin,

with interest. "There is a path to the spring and you won't wet your feet."

Nell needs no further urging, but rises immediately.

"I am all ready to receive congratulations and forgiveness," remarks Tom, when they are outside. "What was your feeble attempt at cheering compared with this?"

"I give up," laughs Nell; "you have done wonders. Are you going to use those old bottles?"

"I don't find any new ones."

"But those are all dust."

"You are not going to rinse them out. The mustier the water tastes the more highly it will be valued."

"Do you suppose it is all right?" asks Nell, looking doubtfully into the spring.

"Doesn't that state as much?" asks Laible, pointing to the aforementioned slab.

"Aren't you deep, dark, deceitful and designing?" says Nell, reading the words pencilled in capitals.

"Have a little?" asks Tom, offering some water in the best looking of the bottles.

Nell takes a good swallow, and drops the bottle with a grimace, which elicits a heartier laugh from Tom Laible than he has indulged in for many a year.

"Shall we bottle any for your private use?" he asks.

"If all Eustace wants is to have a bad taste in his mouth, his trip has not been in vain," says Nell, "By all means let him take away all he can carry."

A half hour afterward the small cavalcade is on its winding way. The space beneath the front seat of the carriage, is filled with a motley collection of bottles, some with corks, and some stopped with rolls of paper, through which the mineral water is slowly but surely soaking. Mr. Lamkin, cheered almost to the verge of inebriation, occasionally carols forth a cheerful strain as they move on among foliage greener than ever in the sunlight, while far away on the mountains the rain still falls.

CHAPTER IX.

A PREDICAMENT.

"Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee."

—BURNS.

AN accident to one of the saddle horses prevents the two young gentlemen from uninterrupted attendance upon the carriage party. Mr. Lamkin, who is quite unwilling to lose the benefits which accrue to him from their company, proposes that they make the Profile House a rendezvous.

"I intend to take a little rest there, anyway," he says, "and if you can adjust your affairs, and meet us there, I'm sure we shall be very glad."

The alacrity with which Favernel assents to this arrangement, astonishes Tom Laible, much as he has seen of his friend's infatuation.

"I don't understand, Douglas, why you are so eager after Miss Forrest," he says. "For my part, nothing repels me so much, as to know that a person is the least unbalanced, mentally."

"But doesn't it strike you, Tom, that there has been an improvement even since we met her?" asks Favernel, earnestly. "To be sure I've talked with her very little, but there seems to me to be an added repose of manner. I must see her again," he adds, looking through Laible in an absorbed sort of

way. "It stands to reason that her friends have done their best for her, and yet I shall not be satisfied until I have approached the subject of her fallacy myself, and have seen whether I also shall be unsuccessful with her."

"Umph!" exclaims Laible. "It strikes me that her complaint is catching, and that you're a little off, yourself."

Favernel does not answer. A vision of Leslie rises before him, tall and slender. He sees the sweet, pathetic expression of her lips in repose; the suddenness of her dimples when she smiles. She is beautiful in the eyes of a stranger. In the eyes of this strong, compassionate adorer, she is more than that.

Mr. Lamkin is as good as his word, and so it happens that his party have the Profile House pretty much to themselves during their unseasonable visit.

Nell is sitting in her room on the day after their arrival, writing in her diary, when Leslie enters.

"What's this, Nell—keeping a journal?" she asks brightly. "It's a very bad sign when a girl comes to confiding her sentiments to paper."

"There isn't a particle of sentiment in this. It's all about our drive," returns Nell,—“how we passed by rivers and ravines, in the depths of which hundreds of waterfalls slip over the shining rocks. It is very finely put, and exceedingly entertaining. Shall I read you a dozen or so pages?”

"Certainly," replies Leslie, unlocking the common trunk, "read to me while I beautify."

"What are you going to beautify for?"

"O, didn't you know? Mr. Lamkin has received a telegram saying that the gentlemen will be here this evening."

Nell jumps up as though she were galvanized. "You needn't think I shall read you a word then. I need an immense amount of beautifying myself."

"You anticipate seeing them, don't you?" asks Leslie, with a matronly air.

"Of course. Don't you?"

"Just reflect a minute," returns Leslie, letting down her beautiful hair, which ripples back in glittering waves under the strokes of the brush. "You have calmly appropriated my hero, who seems very willing to be appropriated. I was never so supplanted in my life—and then—"

"O, Leslie, is that true?" and a burning blush overspreads Nell's face. "Do you suppose Mr. Laible thinks that I try to monopolize him?"

"You silly Twinkle! Did you think me in earnest? I am not surprised that he likes better to talk to you than to me. You are so bright, and I so matter-of-fact."

"Hush! Don't talk nonsense, that is *my* specialty. It is of no use to pretend not to notice that Mr. Laible avoids you, for it is avoiding, no one could ignore you, and I have done nothing but puzzle my brains over it."

Leslie does not answer. Nell watches the practiced hand gather up and twist the coil of hair.

"Any one can see that he talks to me for the

sake of talking," she goes on, a little bitterly. "I wish we had never met him!" This last in a low tone of excitement that makes her friend wonder.

"If you are exciting yourself on my account, Twinkle, it is a great waste of time," Leslie says. "I care very little, only I should like sometimes to be included in your conversations, and not left as a matter of course to 'Gruff-and-Glum,' as you call him."

"He has outgrown that name," replies Nell, from behind the closet door, where she is suspiciously quiet. "He is just splendid," she asserts in a rather thick voice.

"Sometimes I think his brain is affected," remarks Leslie, going on with her toilet. "I never saw such odd behavior. What do you think, Twinkle, can make him so strange and preoccupied?"

Nell comes out of the closet a little pink, as to the eyelids, but with a very erect head.

"You have informed me that I might keep my opinion on that subject to myself," she returns.

Leslie laughs.

"That's so; you're a good child," she returns.

Here there is a knock at the door, and Miss Cobb is admitted.

"Come in, cousin Dorothy. Sit down by that window and feast your eyes," says Leslie.

Miss Cobb takes the offered chair.

"Only a few more days of this pleasantness, my dear," she says, looking out of the window.

"O, Miss Cobb!" cries Nell, turning suddenly toward the new comer, "that is what I keep, *keep* saying to myself—'Only a few more days.'"

Leslie looks wistfully from one to the other. How different her future looks from that of these two.

"What shall you do, cousin Dorothy, when you go back?" she asks, seating herself at Miss Cobb's feet, and clasping her hands in the elder woman's lap.

"Begin again, dear," returns Miss Cobb, looking tranquilly down.

Nell's presence checks the questions as to ways and means which rise to Leslie's lips.

"And I," says Nell, "I sha'n't begin again; I shall go right on where I left off, and don't I just abominate the idea!" and she twitches her dress off the bed as though she felt a personal spite against it, which, indeed, she does when comparing it with Leslie's smoothly fitting costume.

"There are the young gentlemen," announces Miss Cobb from her window.

"Good!" exclaims Nell, bestirring herself actively.

"And it's six o'clock," adds Leslie. "Cousin Dorothy, will you go down?"

"With you, my dear."

"Very well; and you will come in a minute, Twinkle?"

"Or less," replies Nell, giving hurried finishing touches to her toilet.

After tea, the reunited six start down the road, a

straggling party, to look at the "Old Man of the Mountain." Mr. Lamkin is in high spirits at the return of his aids, and trips along beside Favernel, talking busily until they reach the gigantic profile. The glassy little lake at the foot of the mountain is soon noisy with the shouts of the visitors.

"Don't all speak at once," says Favernel; "the most methodical echo would be puzzled to know which to answer first."

"It seems as if the fairies themselves must be calling to us from among those thick green trees," says Leslie, delighted, "the voices are so real."

Tom Laible, who is standing next her, replies: "I thought it was against the principles of fairies to come out in daytime."

"Of course it is," assents Leslie with a gay nod, "but it must be night in the shadow of those close, thick trees. I should like to get over there."

Laible, as he walks back to the hotel beside her, veers off from the dangerous subject.

"I should like to stay here a week or two," he says.

"I suppose it is a gay place in the season."

"Is your home in the city or country?" asks Laible abruptly.

"It is in Lawndale, a Boston suburb, you know, and I think one of the prettiest places in the world, but I suppose it is natural one should believe so of one's home."

"Yes, if one has a home," he replies.

"And haven't you one?"

"No. Favernel and I are the 'Two Orphans.' We live around at hotels, which, if I were a man with Favernel's money, I should be slow to do, I think. If I were rich," pursues Laible, "I would own a house and live in it if I kept bachelor's hall. What is your opinion of hotel living, Miss Forrest?"

"The extent of my experience in that line has been comprised in this trip," laughs Leslie. My father has never been willing to leave Fairylands and live in the city a single Winter."

Although at the word "Fairylands" a slight chill steals over him, Laible looks at the calm, sweet face by his side, and as Leslie finishes, he has a glimmering idea which causes his eyes to light, and the corners of his mouth to twitch.

"Won't you describe fairy land to me?" Miss Forrest.

"Has Mr. Favernel not spoken of it to you? But it is egotistical in me to suppose that every one likes to talk of it as I do. I can not describe it, Mr. Laible, although to me it is a remarkably beautiful home, and I hope that sometime you will come to Lawndale with Mr. Favernel and see it."

Laible bows his thanks, while the same expression of amusement lingers about his mouth, and he mentally puts facts together and decides that his friend is in an unenviable predicament.

"Lawndale," he repeats suddenly; "I was in Lawndale a few months ago, calling on a lady friend who was visiting there."

"And driving with her," adds Leslie, demurely.

"So I was. Why—you—"

"Certainly, I told you the other day that it was I whom you came so near annihilating that evening."

"No! I wish I had known it. I took you for a maiden of low degree. I have a dim remembrance that I treated you rather cavalierly—ordered you about a little, did I?" asks Tom, somewhat entertained by the idea.

"Not the least in the world," replies Leslie, detecting the touch of poor human nature. "You were particularly polite—more so than I should expect."

Laible winces at the quiet thrust. How must his recent behavior and avoidance of her have appeared to this young lady. But poor as is the light in which he stands, he reflects that there are grades even in absurdity, and immediately becomes more devoutly thankful that another man than himself stands in Douglas Favernel's shoes.

For the first time he looks at Leslie with a keen enjoyment of her beauty, relieved from the harrowing belief that a great misfortune shadows her life.

"You are a lawyer, Miss Valentine tells me," she says. "That is my father's profession also."

"What!" exclaims Laible, with interest, "is your father Henry Forrest, of Boston?"

"Yes," assents the girl proudly.

"That makes me doubly anxious to accept your

invitation to—Fairyländ,” returns Laible, hesitating over the name.

“Not Fairyländ—Fairyländs,” corrects Leslie, smiling at him. “Gentlemen particularly, make a clumsy mouthful of that name, and I have to explain to each stranger that it originated with my grandmother, and has clung to the place ever since. I am so accustomed to it that I forget how odd it must sound to others.”

“Favernel,” says Tom, passing his friend as they enter the hotel, “you’re sold and the money taken.”

“Why? What do you mean?” asks that gentleman, but Miss Cobb, calling to Laible, prevents an explanation.

“Won’t you and Miss Valentine play a rubber of whist with Mr. Lamkin and me?” she asks, leading the way into a pleasant little parlor, where a bright fire is burning on the andirons.

Leslie seats herself before it, looking exquisite in the thin, black dress, half covered with lace, which trails about her in a graceful mass, and makes Nell feel that her gray Summer silk fits her badly, and has “Brenton, Maine,” written in every scant fold.

Tom looks longingly at the vacant seat by the fire, but follows per force to the whist table, and Douglas takes possession of the coveted place. The latter is hardly to be blamed for falling again into the abstracted gaze which has roused Miss Forrest’s wondering ire so often. For the time, however, she

is unconscious of it. She leans back in her arm chair, the firelight playing on her hair, her dress and the white arms that her elbow sleeves display.

She does not look up from the blaze, but says, "Can you look into the fire and see Fairylands?"

Favernel feels that here lies the opportunity which it is his duty to embrace, and he replies earnestly, "No, Miss Forrest, I think it better, more healthy for the mind, not to imagine things."

"O, how much pleasure you miss," says the girl, smiling dreamily, "and how very little imagination it takes to see it all—woods, river and islands, all clear and vivid in that three feet of blaze."

"Miss Leslie, I do not wish to transgress, but indeed you injure yourself by allowing these fancies," and Favernel bends toward her, speaking still more earnestly.

"It is you who are fanciful," she returns, with a light laugh, which causes Laible to glance across from his whist table, and wonder what new absurdity his friend is committing.

"You must think my mind is one very easily unbalanced, if you fear such things can hurt me. I don't mean that I am homesick, or anything like that," she explains; "no one could enjoy this trip more than I, but do you not understand that I can never recall every nook and corner of Fairylands too often for my own happiness."

"My poor little lady! You do love your image so strongly."

"Only less strongly than the reality. I suppose

you will think me foolish, Mr. Favernel, but I can not escape entirely the haunting fear that some time in the future I shall be obliged to descend from my high estate, and live like ordinary mortals in a brick block, or some such place," and Leslie turns a troubled face toward her companion.

"No, no," hesitates Favernel, "unless you could be persuaded by some dear friend that it would be more for your true happiness to give it all up for his sake."

Leslie blushes, a self-aggravated blush, which grows worse with every moment; but, strangely, Mr. Favernel is not regarding her; he is looking with perplexed brows into the fire; so her cheeks cool, and she decides that certainly her companion is the strangest man in the world. Her gaze wanders involuntarily to the whist table, where it catches Laible's eyes. He smiles back at her, and trumps his partner's trick.

"Why, do you see what you did? What is the matter with you!" exclaims Miss Cobb, in vexed tones.

"I was star-gazing," explains Laible, coolly, again sending a smile to Leslie, who turns back quickly to her fire; and little Twinkle Valentine's eyeglasses do not fall off once all the rest of the evening.

"May I come to see you this Summer, Miss Forrest?" continues Favernel, in the undertone they have been using.

"Certainly," replies Leslie; then, with a greater

show of interest, "you may bring Mr. Laible with you."

"Thank you for both of us; and where shall we find you?"

"O, at Fairylands. I am not going away again this Summer."

Favernel looks at her hopelessly.

"How are we to get there?" he asks, in what he endeavors to make a light tone, but which falls considerably short of success.

"By balloon, if you can not think of any other way," returns Leslie, mockingly; "and, Mr. Favernel," she adds, "I mean to take Miss Valentine home with me if possible, and I hope we can have some right gay times; you must help me. I believe there has been no dancing on the lawn at Fairylands since I was a little girl."

Favernel nerves himself for the trial. Here is his chance—the opportunity he has awaited.

"There will be no more dancing there," he says, slowly. "We live in a prosaic age, and must shake off sentimental fancies. What should you say, Miss Forrest," he continues cautiously, "if a trustworthy person should convince you that there is no longer a fairy land."

As he speaks these words he is frightened at their effect on his companion. Every vestige of color fades from her face, leaving it intensely white against the crimson chair, while her eyes shine like the stars they have been likened to. For a

moment she sits motionless, then she leans forward and grasps Favernel's arm with both her hands.

"That, then, is why you have come ; why I have had no letter for so long. My father has lost Fairy-lands ! O, why did you wait ; why did you not tell me before ; why did you not tell me before ? " and to Favernel's horror the pretty golden head falls on the arm of her chair, and Leslie's sobs shake her from head to foot.

On the moment, chairs are pushed back from the card-table, and Nell has her arms about Leslie, while Laible turns to his stupefied friend.

"What have you done ? What have you said to her ? "

"Told her fairy land was a myth," is all the explanation Favernel can offer, and as Leslie sits up, determined to control herself, Laible says hastily :

"You misunderstood Favernel, Miss Forrest. He intended a joke, and you took him at his word."

Leslie rises, and looking contemptuously at her mentally prostrate foe, says :

"I hope Mr. Favernel will pardon my stupidity in not comprehending his witticism, and wish to congratulate him on his delicacy and good taste," then she sweeps from the room, every inch of lace on her long dress trembling, while her three sympathetic but amazed supporters follow.

When the door has closed upon the original carriage party, the two friends look at each other in eloquent silence for the space of a minute ; then

Laible varies the monotony by bursting into a long, hearty laugh.

"Hold your noise, Tom," says the other, angrily. "May the devil fly off with me if I ever attempt the cure of another lunatic!"

At this, Laible bends double, but is partially restored by the threatened application of a pitcher of water.

"This is what comes of deviating from a prescribed rule of conduct laid down in one's cool, collected moments," says Favernel, when he can make himself heard; "I did it once when I went to that lawn party, I did it again when I followed like a fool after that girl, and what little I can do to repair damages shall be done. I leave this place to-night, with you or without you. Good-by," he continues, moving to the door, "I'll see you two weeks hence, in New York."

"Hold on, Favernel, come back and be reasonable; you won't leave here to-night," says Laible, from his position by the fire-place.

"Good-by," repeats the other, opening the door.

Laible steps forward.

"Wait a minute, only a minute, and you will not go."

"If you detain me here five minutes, you are a magician," says Favernel, closing the door and standing with his back against it, meanwhile wearing an unpromising expression of face.

"If there is a lunatic in this party, it is you."

"I should deserve the name if I stayed here, certainly," retorts Favernel, opening the door.

"Have a minute's patience; Miss Forrest is as sane as I am."

"You have said that before, but it doesn't make any difference. You should have heard her go on to-night! It was worse than ever, wanting me to bring you to fairy land, and all that rubbish; but then it's full moon and perhaps she is worse at such a time."

"I can never get to the point if you don't quit interrupting me at commas; the whole thing lies in a nut-shell; the name of her father's place is Fairylands, and she takes you for your brother whom she has never seen but once. Why, her father is attorney for the firm you are about to enter, Henry Forrest of Boston."

The blood rushes to Favernel's face, in the revulsion of feeling caused by these announcements.

"The name of her father's place Fairylands," he repeats.

"Certainly it is, and if you had not misled us both with your cock-and-bull story of a lawn-party, we must have seen long ago that Miss Forrest mistook you for your brother."

"But Frank," begins Favernel, when his friend interrupts him.

"My dear fellow, your head is thicker than I thought possible. It requires no deeper calculation than the addition of two and two, in order to arrive at the conclusion that your brother Frank is

at the present time ornamented with a beard, as thick and irreproachable as the one you sacrificed at Miss Forrest's shrine, whatever he may have looked like a year ago."

"And I never even thought of it;" and Favernel continues to stare blankly at his companion.

"I admit that things have worked in such a way as to be misleading," says Tom. "Who would ever think of a man in his senses calling his home-stead Fairylands! But this afternoon it all came out, and the unfortunate, half-witted creature, with the exquisite eyes, explained it all. Of course I did not let her know that it was news to me."

"Don't throw my absurdities up to me, Laible; shake hands and say good-by," says Favernel, advancing; "hunt me up when you get to town, unless I fall a prey to the fool-catcher before then."

"Why, what do you mean? You surely don't intend to go."

"Don't? Perhaps you would consider it a pleasant thing to do, to remain here and inform this outraged young person that I have been imposing upon her for a week past, to say nothing of having considered her a lunatic, etc.! No, I thank you."

"O, come now, Favernel, that is showing the white feather the worst way; you do not mean to go off and leave me with this explanation on my hands, do you?"

"You needn't explain," says the other doggedly.

"Nonsense! Of course I must; for when she gets home it will all come out the first time she

meets your brother; and," adds Tom, diplomatically, "a nice character he'll give you."

Favernel hesitates. To be sure Miss Forrest has ceased to be an object of interest to him; she has fallen to the level of an ordinary hysterical young lady; still, for the sake of what she has been, he does not like his last remembrance of her to be the look so full of grief and contempt, which she threw upon him a few minutes back. Perhaps the best way will be for him to remain, clear his character if he can, and then get away as fast as horses will carry him.

"I had no business to come here under any circumstances," he says, shortly, "and I own up to having been completely infatuated with the idea that I should make an excellent head and front to a lunatic asylum—and so I should, in one sense."

"How's that?" asks Laible, overlooking the latter part of this speech. "Why shouldn't you have come?"

"Why," returns Douglas, squaring his shoulders and speaking with some embarrassment, "the truth is I'm dead broke."

Tom stares in mute astonishment for a moment, then speaks in a sympathetic, almost tender voice: "Well, you've made quick time, old fellow. I'm awfully sorry. What was it? Horses? Cards?"

Favernel looks up with the sudden smile very rare with him.

"Neither. Don't worry about me, Laible. It's a temporary thing."

"Well, you are going to stay, aren't you?" asks Tom, returning to his subject.

The cloud falls again over Favernel's face. "You will not behave in such a manner as to make these people believe you've done something to be ashamed of?"

"People! What do I care for these people? Miss Forrest is the only one whose opinion I care a rush for. Let us go and have a game of billiards. If I stay, it devolves upon you to amuse me all night, for I am not likely to be sleepy."

Laible follows the speaker from the room, an amused smile on his countenance, and as he thinks of all that has been, and of his friend's predicament, he thanks the lucky stars that have given him no twin brother.

CHAPTER X.

THE EXPLANATION.

"I bowed to hide my pain,
With a man's unskillful art;
I moved my lips and could not say
The thorn was in my heart."

—W. D. HOWELLS.

THE two young gentlemen are rather late at breakfast the following morning, and entering after the quartette are seated, take their places. Leslie looks up and bids them good-morning with lips that smile, but eyes that are heavy and sad. Nell considers her friend rather babyish. What if Mr. Favernel has made a stupid joke, this taking it so to heart seems still more stupid. But there is much excuse for Miss Forrest. Her friend's incomprehensible manner from the moment of her meeting him, the unmistakable pity with which he has so often regarded her, taken together with the embarrassment and constraint evinced by him whenever she suddenly addressed him, and especially shown when she referred to her home, seemed suddenly cleared and explained in the conclusion at which she jumped on the previous evening, and the shock was great. If there were really news so bad that her father was unwilling to telegraph it, why did he not come himself to help her bear it? But that might be impossible, and if so, he might have

intrusted the message to Mr. Favernel as well as to another. Many a time through the long night has Leslie reproached herself for her want of self-control, and hard has been the waiting for morning. It seems absurd to believe that her friend would say such a thing as that Fairylands has passed from existence, as a joke. Where would be the point?

So she sits through the breakfast hour, occasionally glancing up at Favernel and wondering at his capital appetite. If her father is ruined, this man has no right to eat, while she sits waiting to hear the worst. If he is not ruined—well, then, Mr. Favernel is welcome to indulge in as much steak as he chooses. Nell talks unusually fast and much to make up for Leslie's silence.

"And this morning we see the Flume," she says, "although I know exactly how it is going to look, with its great boulder hanging between the rock walls."

"Photographs give you little enough idea," says Laible, "and they do not say a word about the ground and lofty tumbling you are apt to perform, unless you are cautious. There is a thin film of water over everything."

"All the more exciting," says Nell. "It is a perfect morning; we must be off early."

And so they are. Leslie, sitting at the back of the carriage with Miss Cobb, is obliged to curb her impatience as best she can. Since saying good-morning, Favernel has not once caught her eye,

and his face, no less grave than her own, makes her heart sink within her.

"Say good-by to the 'Old Man,'" says Nell as they reached the Profile. "The clouds are just falling over him."

They pass the solemn face, guarding the toy lake in its bower of green, and whirl along the road until they reach the Flume, when, leaving the carriage, they climb through it. As the stepping-stones are uncertain and slippery, Favernel, as he happens to be near Leslie, offers her his hand. She accepts his assistance, casting upon him such an anxious, inquiring look, that it is all he can do to steel himself against her. But, growing up sisterless, Favernel has acquired an odd disbelief in, and distaste for the average young lady, and he reminds himself of the causeless passion of tears into which this pretty, delicate girl threw herself last evening.

It is not until the party have left the Flume and are standing by the Pool looking down into its golden water, fifty feet below, that Douglas and Miss Forrest are really alone.

"This is the wildest place yet, is it not?" he remarks, as, by tacit agreement, they seat themselves on the bank.

Leslie looks up at the wild woods which surround them in every direction; then Nell's gay laugh comes faintly from where the others have strayed—the opposite side of the Pool. The air is full of the fragrance of wild roses. Leslie gathers one,

and in her effort to reach another lets the first fall on Favernel's hand. He takes it.

"Give me this," he says, then, angry at his own folly, tosses it back into her lap.

"Yes, do take it," says Leslie simply. "I love them, they grow so thickly about Fairylands."

It is the first time Favernel has heard her name her home since learning his blunder, and his forehead grows crimson.

"Miss Forrest, I have something exceedingly unpleasant to tell you," he says, looking away from her.

"I know it. I am trying to make up for my lack of self-control last night, by enforcing a great deal this morning. You come from my father?"

"No, Miss Forrest."

"Then who has told you that he is in danger of losing Fairylands? I am very tired," the girl says quickly, "and I am not a child. I have no doubt you mean to do the kindest thing, but I assure you it is to tell me all as soon as possible."

Favernel notes the nervous clasping and unclasping of the speaker's hands—an action at curious variance with her composed tone. Suddenly he understands that she supposes him not only to be his brother, but to be a messenger with news of loss and disaster from her father. Her emotion of the night before is amply explained, and the moment seals Douglas Favernel's fate. From that time, he is devoted heart and soul to the fair girl beside him.

He looks into her eyes steadily when he speaks again.

"I will do as you say, Miss Forrest; I will tell you all. First, that your mind may be at ease, you must know that I am the bearer of no ill-tidings from your home; then, let me start at the beginning. Do you know that I have a twin brother?"

"No, I know nothing of your family," replies Leslie, at once relieved from her former fears, and mystified as to what may be coming.

"My resemblance to this brother is so striking that when we were young boys it grew to be annoying, and we agreed that as soon as we grew older, we would retain our identities by wearing our whiskers differently. It was decided that I should wear a beard, and Frank none. By carrying out this plan, you can understand that we almost forgot our wonderful likeness to one another, and fell entirely out of the habit of having others mistaken in us."

"I see," assents Leslie.

"About two years ago, an event occurred which estranged us."

As he pauses, still looking at her, Leslie nods slightly.

"The affair of the will. I have heard of it," she says.

"Since then I have not seen my brother, Miss Forrest."

Leslie does not speak, and it is with visible effort

that her companion continues, watching her anxiously as he does so.

"Miss Forrest, it was my brother Frank who spent an evening with you, shortly before you came to the mountains."

Leslie looks at the speaker, puzzled, then flushes and grows pale.

"What do you mean—Mr. Favernel?"

"I mean that I never saw you until we met at Bethel."

Leslie springs to her feet, and her eyes sparkle. She recalls that morning with painful vividness. Her pride smarts afresh.

"How did you dare impose upon me!" she cries, her head thrown back in sovereign displeasure.

"Believe me, it was unintentional," Favernel rises also, and speaks eagerly. "I supposed I had met you somewhere. My brother's connection with the affair never occurred to me, dolt that I was; the last time I had heard of him he was abroad—and the worst is yet to come, Miss Forrest."

Leslie challenges the worst with dark eyes that would annihilate anything less than the courage of despair with which the culprit proceeds.

"You spoke of meeting me in fairy land, and I immediately concluded that you were insane, and your mania was a belief in fairy land. When I spoke to you last night I was making a philanthropic effort to disabuse your mind of its fancy. My eminent success you will remember."

"Probably always," returns Leslie, with freezing

contempt. "Of course from this time it will be as though we had never met."

"No!" exclaims Favernel, stepping forward and seizing her hands in an uncontrollable impulse; "that can not be. I have met you, and that is to love you."

Leslie's face is very white and the eyes that look up at Douglas are swimming in tears of anger.

"I'm a brute!" he says contritely, pleadingly, still holding her hands.

"You are," returns Leslie, scarcely able to utter the words.

Douglas drops her hands, and with one parting look of wretchedness, turns and disappears among the trees.

He has hardly gone when the others of the party approach. Leslie turns away to compose herself. Tom Laible is the first to address her.

"What have you done with Mr. Favernel, Miss Forrest?" he inquires, with a whimsical air of understanding the case perfectly.

"Mr. Favernel has gone. I don't know where," responds Leslie, shortly.

Laible sobers, and comes close to her.

"Miss Forrest, I am on my knees before you for my part in the affair," he says, softly, uncovering his head and speaking with an earnest respect, very different from his ordinary light manner.

Nell, Miss Cobb and Mr. Lamkin walk away.

Leslie is silent, fighting her tears.

"You don't know what a trump Douglas is," con-

tinues Tom, pleadingly. "I hope you 've forgiven him ; he is as innocent of any design to—"

"Mr. Laible," Leslie interrupts, loftily, having vanquished her emotion, "I should think it would occur to you that this subject is unpleasant to me."

"By jove ! I should think it would be," exclaims Tom, repentantly. "But, Miss Forrest, you'll not be too hard on me, you will still permit me to call on you at your home ?"

Leslie looks down thoughtfully.

"If you will think a minute," the young man continues, insidiously, "it was your friend, Miss Valentine, who presented me to you. Isn't that an unexceptionable reference ?"

Leslie can not help smiling. She looks up and gives him her hand.

"I shall always be happy to see you," she says.

"Thank you !" exclaims Tom. "And good-by, for I must try to catch my friend."

"What ! going ?" asks Nell, as he approaches.

"Yes ; I must. Many thanks to you all for your kindness, and may we meet again. Good-by."

Nell looks disconsolately at Leslie, as the young man vanishes.

"Well !" ejaculates Mr. Lamkin, "what's up ?"

"Don't bother," orders Miss Cobb, for whom Leslie's pale face is enough.

"It's easy enough to see that she has rejected the man," says Mr. Lamkin, while he is being energetically chaperoned through the woods by Miss Dorothy. "I imagine, if Mr. Favernel had the odd sen-

sation in his side that I have, this morning, he would n't trouble his head about matrimony." And taking a small, folded paper from his vest pocket, Mr. Lamkin swallows the contents with a relish.

Miss Cobb does not answer. She thinks it highly probable that Mr. Favernel has an odd sensation in his side. Who could help loving her darling!

It is not until they reach their next stopping place, and Leslie and Nell are in their room together, that the former tells her friend of the humiliating light which has been thrown upon late events.

Nell listens with breathless attention to the end, then sinks into deep thought. She looks up finally with a comical expression.

"It is a pleasant thought," she says, "that Mr. Laible has been so attentive to me, merely because he was afraid to talk to a crazy girl."

"Nonsense, Twinkle! Do you know, Mr. Lamkin has just given me a letter from my father. Shall I read it to you? It has been forwarded so often I suspect it is rather stale; but I am just as glad to have it."

Here, there is a knock at the door, and Miss Cobb enters.

"Just in time, cousin Dorothy. I was about to read a letter from my father."

"I should like to hear," returns Miss Cobb.

Her serene face grows more anxious as the end of the journey draws near. Her time of ease and comfort is almost over — "and after that, the deluge."

"It's a horrid world," remarks Twinkle, as she sits down by Miss Cobb.

"Not up here," says Miss Dorothy, looking out the window.

Leslie sighs softly, opens her letter, and reads:

"My Dear Daughter: I have complied with your request, and sent a formal invitation to Mrs. Lamkin to permit Miss Valentine to make us a visit——"

Nell takes an attitude of petrified attention. Leslie glances up at her mischievously.

"——and Mrs Lamkin has written her consent," reads Leslie, slowly.

Twinkle swoops upon her friend, and hugs her ecstatically.

"So I shall not begin where I left off in Brenton. Congratulate me, Miss Cobb."

"I do heartily, my dear," returns Miss Dorothy, a sympathetic gleam lighting up her grave face.

"I hope this will please you, dear child, and that you continue to enjoy your trip," the letter goes on. "'I am in trouble because our good Mrs. Myrick is called away. I do not know how the house will run without her, or where to look for a housekeeper that can fill her place. It occurs to me as I write that cousin Dorothy might take pity on us. Ask her if she prefers music teaching to house-keeping?'"

The hand that hold the letter drops, and Leslie looks up into the chaperone's tranquil face.

All three are silent for a moment, then Miss Cobb speaks:

“‘The Lord will provide.’”

Leslie covers her face with her hands, and Nell takes off her glasses, and wipes her eyes.

“Now, Miss Cobb, I congratulate you,” she exclaims.

“We are all to be congratulated,” says Leslie, looking up. “It will be a great blessing to me to have you, cousin Dorothy.”

“Dear child, it is a deliverance to me to go.”

Leslie takes up the letter and reads on, a cloud falling over her face as she does so.

“‘You will be surprised to learn that my ward arrived last night. It seems that she is temporarily homeless, through some unexpected move of the relatives with whom she has been living, so of course she shall have a home here for the present. I have had hardly any conversation with her as yet. I hope it will not be a trial to you to have her here; she is attractive in appearance, has a very fine presence, and much self-command; a strong character, I judge, altogether. I am glad to think that cousin Dorothy is with you, and that you are so much attached to her. Write as often as you can to your affectionate

FATHER.’

“There!” exclaims Leslie, throwing her head back and frowning. “Isn’t that always the way!”

Twinkle is raising her eyebrows dubiously.

“There is no rose without its thorn,” continues Leslie with sufficient emphasis to compensate for

the triteness of her remark. "Just as we were anticipating so much, here comes this interloper."

"She may be delightful," suggests cousin Dorothy comfortingly.

Leslie shakes her head with an obstinate air.

"Don't dwell on her," says Nell, dancing a little impromptu jig. "I wish I didn't have to go home first."

"I imagine we both wish we might go direct to that little Paradise," says Miss Cobb, smiling, and looking as if the last half hour had robbed her of half her years.

"Never mind. I will be there to receive you. I shall rather like to get there first. Let me see, in three days we shall reach Brenton, and then——home."

"Leslie," says Nell sharply, looking into her friend's radiant face, "I believe you are homesick."

"Twinkle," returns Leslie in the same tone, "I believe I am."

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW HOUSEKEEPER.

"What though our eyes with tears be wet?
The sunrise never failed us yet."

—CELIA THAXTER

AT Fairylands, ten days after the latter conversation, one sunny, delightful afternoon, Leslie comes out to her pony-carriage, drawing on her gloves.

A few steps away, on the lawn, rises an elm tree with a forked trunk, in which is arranged a rustic seat. Here, in an easy posture, sits Miss Appleton—a bright dash of color in the scenery, in her wine colored morning dress, with the red rose half falling out of her black braids. The lids that fall over her pale blue eyes are heavy. The massive braids of her dark hair are heavy and honestly her own. Her mouth, when she is uninterested or unhappy, is heavy, handsome and fascinating as it can become under pleasant excitement, and the scales, on the rare occasions when they are permitted to give their testimony, disclose in uncompromising figures the fact that, as a whole, Miss Appleton is heavy.

Leslie looks across at the half-reclining, luxurious figure, with repressed dislike. One of Blanche's arms is clasping a white cat, in whose soft fur her

cheek is buried, and her eyes which have been fastened upon the novel in her lap, look slowly up as Leslie comes out.

"Is it train time? Ugh, what a lazy day," she says in a languid, slow voice, as she pushes the cat away and stretches her arms. "Does not the quiet of this place grow into something awful, sometimes, Leslie?"

"I like it," is the young girl's short rejoinder. Her replies to Miss Appleton are always short, much to the latter young lady's amusement.

"Do you mean to say that you never fill the house with company, and do something to wake yourselves up?"

It is hard for the only daughter of the house, who is a little spoiled, and inexperienced in the art of self-control, to endure the insolent superiority in the questioner's tone; but Leslie feels the satisfaction it would give the "interloper" to see her lose her temper, and her pride comes to her aid.

"I am sorry that you are not better entertained," is all she says.

"O, never mind me; I was only thinking of you—fancying you here all through a New England Winter. Heavens! it must be death in life; it is a right pretty place in Summer, though," finishes Miss Appleton, looking leniently about her. "Well," with a yawn, "I must go in and dress to meet your little friend. Farewell," as Leslie, without trusting herself to speak, enters the carriage and drives away, thankful to one of the ponies who shakes his

saucy head, and gives little mutinous springs as he goes, thereby engrossing her attention.

Blanche looks after her with a slow smile.

"You shall find that I am not going to consider myself highly favored of fortune because of a paltry month within your gates, young lady," she thinks; "and, more than that, if it suits me, I will show you that I can make the one month a dozen, if I like."

Leslie swallows a grieved, angry sob, as she hurries on her way. That this ill-bred stranger should calmly domesticate herself in her loved home—should be all grateful sweetness to her father, and all exasperating patronage to herself, is a bitter trial; but Leslie fortifies herself with the thought that it can not be for many weeks, and then Miss Appleton is quite forgotten as the little carriage stops by the depot platform, for the train has arrived, and Leslie becomes instantly absorbed in watching for the expected guest. Finally, the well-known figure comes in view, peering here and there through her eyeglasses.

"Here, Twinkle, here," calls Leslie, involuntarily, under her breath, waving her beribboned whip.

Nell sees her, and hurries forward.

"Now I am happy," she says, having kissed her friend, and settled down by her side.

The ponies turn and start rapidly for home, their long white manes and tails glistening in the sunlight.

"How did you leave them all?" asks Leslie.

"Serenely happy. Aunt Lamkin has written an ode to the 'Old Man of the Mountain,' which I told her I would commit to memory. I made the girls some hats that include all the colors of the rainbow, and promised to send them the newest fashions, and they let me come in peace. How does Miss Appleton turn out?"

Leslie looks at her friend. "I believe I will let you form your own judgment."

"All right. O, Leslie, what lovely ponies! what a beautiful road! O," as they enter the gates, "why did n't you go into raptures over it?"

Leslie laughs.

"The same answer. I thought I'd let you form your own judgment."

Nell gazes about her in ecstasy. On the rustic seat, when they arrive, sits Miss Appleton quite as if she had not gone in, except that now she has on a light blue dress the color of her eyes, and in her belt are hung rosebuds, pink, yellow and white, with long stems.

With the gracious air of lady of the manor, she approaches and kisses Nell's mignonette face.

The guest turns to Leslie, when they stand in the hall with the shafts of colored light streaming across rich rugs.

"I think she is elegant!" she exclaims. "What a delightful manner."

"I am glad," returns Leslie, pluming herself on the forethought with which she has held her tongue.

"Why, I was never in such a house," continues

Nell, climbing the broad stair-case. "It's a palace. I should think you could not have breathed in Brenton."

Leslie laughs happily, and enters the room which Nell is to occupy, and the latter stands on the threshold, as though afraid to step in.

On the background of the carpet are flung sprays of large, dark moss-roses; on the panels of the massive oak furniture are red-winged birds perpetually poised in air; fine curtains, edged with broad lace, hang at the windows, underneath others of dark red satin with broad stripes of black velvet, on which are embossed moss-roses in lustrous red and green. The exquisite china with its rose-buds, and every delicate appointment of the dressing-case, with its large mirror, the rich lace covering of the bed with the ruby satin gleaming through, all impress Nell with a strong sense of luxury.

Leslie, in her single-hearted love for the outside beauties, moves to the window, unconscious of her friend's awe, and pushes aside the curtains. "I think you will like this view," she says, "for it is the best of the river, although, being at the back of the house, you can not see the avenue. You will have to run into my room for that. And now I must leave you to go to Regy. He is laid up with a sprained ankle, and depends upon seeing me often. Ah, here is your trunk," and Leslie directs where it shall be placed.

When the man has left, Nell sinks into a cushioned chair, and takes a long breath.

"Leslie, I have n't a decent thing to put on," she says.

"Twinkle!" exclaims the hostess, deprecatingly. "We expect cousin Dorothy to-morrow," she goes on. "She had to go into the country for a visit, else she would have been here before. Now, make yourself happy a few minutes, while I go to Regy. He lives in one of the turrets which is devoted to his possessions. You can imagine what kind of a place it is," and Leslie goes, leaving Nell to look about her.

The lawn at the back of the house, and beneath her windows slopes down to the water's edge, and under the tall shade trees are gracefully arranged seats of various designs, and tall baskets of pendant vines and flowers, and beyond, the river which lies in a graceful curve, flowing away in the distance, while extending two arms which encircle the mansion on both sides, wandering away, Nell wonders whither. She also wonders if the sun always shines at Fairylands. How would all this loveliness appear deprived of the golden sunlight which bathes it this late June afternoon. But very soon deciding that the palace of a house to which good fortune has brought her must contain endless resources for pleasure, Miss Valentine with an ecstatic little sigh, stands before her mirror, and dresses for dinner, while a shaft of red light strikes through the curtain and lights up her gray summer silk with a glory which she wishes might remain with it.

Giving a last glance at the dark face which

looks back at her, she seats herself on an ottoman by a window, and waits for Leslie who soon makes her appearance.

"Are you ready to go down?" she asks.

"Yes, but I wish you would show me your room first, Leslie. I want to know how to get to it."

"Certainly, come with me," returns her friend, leading Nell through the turns and windings which bring them to the front of the house; and opening a door, Leslie ushers Twinkle into the prettiest place she has ever seen.

A bower of blue and silver, the furniture of bamboo and light blue satin, and a profusion of white lace and muslin; the walls pale blue with a frieze of silver, and curtains running upon silver rods. A book-case of bamboo swings upon the wall, containing Leslie's favorite books. Mirrors, ottomans, and lounges, furnish the room, at one side of which a broad curtain of blue and silver separates the boudoir from a small apartment where is the bed, with its canopy of blue satin and delicate white hangings.

"Do you sleep in that?" asks Nell in an awed tone.

"Indeed I do," laughs Leslie, "and sleep well, too. I had nothing to do with the furnishing of the house; father attended to it all, and while I was at school, he had this extravagant room done for me. Father thinks nothing too good for me."

"What's that thing?" inquires Nell, pointing to a *prie-dieu* at the foot of the bed.

"That is to kneel upon to say one's prayers. I shall have to conceal that fact from cousin Dorothy, for she detests forms, and I do not believe she would live in the house with it if she knew what it was."

"O listen!" exclaims the guest, clasping her hands, for a deep-voiced chime sounds solemnly and beautifully an old hymn.

Nell tiptoes to the window, and opens it softly, then kneels down before it and listens, with her finger to her lips. It is too much for her excitable nature to have the far-off music mingle with the plashing of the fountains, and crown the effects which have succeeded one another in so rapid a succession for the past hour, and Nell does not attempt to conceal the tears that run down her cheeks when the solemn tones cease.

"Why, Leslie, I am so *chilly*," she says, smiling and lifting her wet eyes. "Is there no end to the surprises at this place? I begin to think that you are really the god mother, and that this is fairy-land——"

"You do love it as I do, that chime," says Leslie. "I hope you will not be disappointed when I tell you that it is in this room."

"O no, nor surprised," says Nell resignedly. "Go on; wave your wand and have these walls fade and disappear, and let us be suddenly in a cathedral with the organ sounding, and with you and the hero marching up the aisle to its music, and the priest waiting to marry you, while Mr. Favernel and I bring up the rear,"

Leslie laughs.

"You ridiculous girl, it is my clock, my dear Westminster clock; the only thing for which I ever teased my father," and Nell follows her friend to the mantel where stands a tall clock, dark and un-ornamental, which looks out of keeping with the light, gay room. Leslie touches it lovingly.

"A clock! I can not believe it," exclaims Nell.

"Very well. I can't prove it until to-morrow, for it will not chime again to-night, but it meant dinner then, and father likes us to be prompt, so let us go and show what mountain air has done for our appetites."

Miss Cobb arrives at Lawndale the next afternoon. As she leaves the train, a dapper individual steps from another car, whom she recognizes as Eustace Lamkin. He pauses to look about him, and starts, when Miss Dorothy lays a firm hand on his arm.

"Why—why Miss Cobb," he says, shaking her hand feebly. "I'm delighted, I'm sure."

"So am I," responds the new housekeeper, "for I was just wondering what my next move should be toward getting to Mr. Forrest's."

"There's John now," says Mr. Lamkin, as a *coupé* draws up to the platform.

The man touches his hat as the pair draw near.

"I've been to every train to-day to meet the lady," he explains, addressing Mr. Lamkin, "and Miss Forrest wanted me to say that's why she didn't come to meet her—because it was so uncertain when she'd arrive."

"All right," and Mr. Lamkin holds the carriage-door open.

Miss Cobb looks sharply at the leaf-brown satin interior.

"I don't want to take any dust in there," she says, and slipping off her duster, she folds it up and gives it to the coachman. "Here, just put that beside you."

The man smiles as he starts the horse. "Smarter'n chain lightning, I'll bet," is his mental verdict on the new housekeeper.

Miss Cobb makes short and characteristic exclamations of delight as the beauties of the drive unfolds, to which Mr. Lamkin replies wearily.

"How have you been since our trip?" asks Miss Dorothy.

"Better, I think. Really better," returns the Lamkin with raised eyebrows. "Still I do not venture to work all day. I come out from town nearly always as early as this."

"You'll rust out, rather than wear out if you're not careful," returns Miss Dorothy.

But Mr. Lamkin does not hear her. A bend in the road has revealed to him a trio standing on the grass by the house.

"I declare, there's Favernel with Blanche and Miss Forrest!" he exclaims with some interest. "Not the one you know," as Miss Cobb leans forward, "but my cousin's *fiancé*. Looks just like the other; not a bit of difference that I can see. Queer experience that of ours, meeting the wrong man."

Miss Cobb has not time to reply before the carriage stops beneath the *porte cochère*. She notices Miss Appleton who gives her a cold, supercilious look out of half-closed eyes, and being obliged to pass her in ascending the steps hears her say, as she turns to her lover, "In the world, but not of it." Then Leslie, who has waited at the door, draws Miss Cobb within before she kisses her. Nell comes rushing down the stairs, and gives the housekeeper an enthusiastic embrace.

"Here we are again together. I am so glad!"

"I am so glad," echoes Leslie.

"I am glad," says Miss Cobb, looking around her and up at the beamed ceiling. "What a beautiful home you have, dear," she adds simply.

"Come up to your home," says Leslie.

"And you will find me in Regy's room when you want me," says Nell, skipping up the stairs.

Leslie and Miss Cobb follow more sedately.

"Nell is so good to Regy," remarks Leslie, and leads the way into the housekeeper's room.

Such a pleasant, sunny room with its two southern windows. Miss Dorothy walks across the daisy bestrewn carpet and looks out, a strange expression growing in her eyes. Perhaps she is thinking of the view she obtained from her room in New York, of shed, alley, and ash-heap.

"Leslie, I want to ask you something," she says, turning around and facing the girl. "I suppose that was Miss Appleton whom I saw as I came in—"

Leslie bows assent.

"She made a remark about me as I passed."

"O cousin Dorothy! Already?" exclaims Leslie anxiously.

"What she said would have been complimentary had she meant it in a certain sense. She said I was in the world, but not of it."

"Oh!" cries Leslie.

"Never mind, dear. People that use that tone can never injure me, but it has made me think. I suppose I do look odd and old-fashioned," and Miss Cobb looks down over her scant gown with a doubtful air. "If I am to live here I must not disgrace you; you must look after me. I want to dress as you like."

"You do, cousin Dorothy." Leslie's eyes sparkle as she speaks. "Always trust me. I will try to be like a daughter to you, in this respect as in others."

Here, distant strains of music are heard. Leslie throws open the door, and the song comes to them with greater distinctness.

"There; that is Blanche," she says; "her voice is heavenly. Who would think to listen to her that she is heartless, vain and insulting!"

Miss Cobb looks in some surprise at the excited face.

"Then you have found your fears as to the new member of the household, well grounded."

"Yes. She is a clever designing woman — I can not call her a girl, though she is one, in years. She makes herself excessively agreeable to my dear father who admires her, as Nell does also. You and I will probably be of one mind with regard to her, as

I see she is not going to consider it worth her while to fascinate you—”

“How soon will she be married?” asks Miss Cobb, unfastening her shawl strap.

“Heigho. I can’t tell,” sighs Leslie, “but I am counting the days, for it seems she only came here for a month. Then the people with whom she has lived will take her back. My fear is that she will not go.”

So saying the girl moves to a small table whereon stands a solitaire vase, empty. She views it in speechless wrath for a moment.

“What is the matter, child?” asks Miss Cobb, looking around at the scornful face.

“That—creature—has taken the half-opened tea rose I placed here for you. I saw it in her hair, but could not believe she would have the audacity—”

“Now, now, never mind, dear. Let us overlook these things,” says the housekeeper soothingly, “until the time comes for her to go. How wonderfully Mr. Favernel is like his brother. Is he as agreeable?” asks Miss Cobb, laudably anxious to change the subject.

The expression upon Leslie’s face indicates that avoiding Scylla, the speaker has fallen into Charybdis.

“Dear, dear, child, I quite forgot. There let it drop. I think Mr. Douglas Favernel was an honest, well-meaning young man, but it can’t matter to us,

and if you do not agree with me, the matter may rest there."

Leslie gives her cousin an affectionate squeeze.

"I am forcibly reminded every day that I am a spoiled child," she says, "and I am afraid you are not going to be severe enough with me. Let us go and see Regy. The poor boy has a sprained ankle, and is dependent on visitors."

CHAPTER XII.

A COUP D'ETAT.

"Some things are bitter that were sweet."

—W. D. HOWELLS.

MISS COBB has been only a few days in her new position, but as she sits by one of Regy's windows darning stockings late one afternoon, Leslie watches her, and finds it difficult to realize how they ever got on without her, so capably does she shoulder all the domestic responsibilities of the great house.

Nell lies on the bed beside Regy, her head on a pillow against the footboard while she reads aloud from Jules Verne. Miss Cobb occasionally glances out of her window, and suddenly her brow becomes troubled by a scene being enacted on the driveway. She sees Miss Appleton saunter down the road and meet the carriage which has just brought her guardian from the depot. She sees the horse stop, and Mr. Forrest leave the carriage. He gives his arm to his ward, and together they walk down the river bank and disappear within the ornamental, covered platform which is used as a landing for boats. It is a pleasant, amicable little action, but it does not impress Miss Cobb pleasantly. Instinctively she grudges every moment which Blanche Appleton spends alone with her guardian.

She is glad that Leslie, lazily listening to the reading, has not seen.

It is a well-rehearsed scene which is being played within the little building, and it is not a difficult undertaking which Miss Appleton has in hand. Here is a generous, hospitable man into whose care her dying father intrusted her welfare. The generous man is also a rich man, whose luxurious home, if a trifle dull, suits her ease-loving, self-indulgent nature, and she has decided that it is vastly foolish in her to leave it until, with the prestige a wedding here will give her, she does so for her own home.

It does not take many minutes to accomplish her end. A few sad words, a few lingering, wistful glances toward river and woods—not toward the house—a few earnest expressions of gratitude, a few undemonstrative tears, and the business is done. After the interview, Blanche having gone to her room, Mr. Forrest, a slight flush still on his face, mounts to the turret chamber, and there finds Leslie, Miss Cobb and Nell, surrounding the impatient boy.

"And how are you to-night, my son?" he asks, seating himself on the side of the bed which Nell vacates for him.

"Perfectly well, that's the mischief of it," replies the boy. "I wish I was raving with fever."

"Reginald, don't tempt the Lord," says Miss Cobb severely.

"I should die outright if it wasn't for these girls," he continues with a grudging sense of gratitude.

"And we'll have better times still," promises

Leslie comfortingly. "You will not notice how time flies at all."

Regy grunts incredulously.

"If I'm not well for the Fourth, I'm going to have all my fire-works up here in the room, and set them off on the bed," he says doggedly.

"You will be well by that time," says Nell. "I know all about a sprained ankle, such as yours is. It won't last long."

"What have you done with Blanche, papa?" asks Leslie.

"Left her down stairs."

"I don't want her to feel lonely these last evenings that she is here," continues the girl.

"She will not go away for the present," says Mr. Forrest, calmly. "I have induced her to change her plan."

"O papa, why did you!" breaks impulsively from Leslie, but Miss Cobb never moves a muscle.

"My daughter, why should you begrudge your roof to that homeless girl, so long as she wants it?" asks Mr. Forrest in a tone that makes Leslie's heart beat fast.

"I thought—that is, if she does not like Fairylands, it seems a pity that she should be urged to remain here—"

"You are entirely mistaken in all that. She loves the place, and dreads to leave it. It is very easy to mistake these reserved natures. Still waters run deep," and the astute lawyer shakes his head know-

ingly. "Her home can not have been a happy one, and she dreads to return to it."

Silence settles on the little group. Miss Cobb continues her occupation of darning stockings, her face stern and unmoved. Leslie, red and uncomfortable, walks to the open window, and her father, displeased with what he considers her lack of generosity, says a last word to his son, and leaves the room.

The south breeze sweeps in as Leslie seats herself in the high window-seat, and Nell breaks the embarrassing quiet that succeeds Mr. Forrest's departure.

"Your room is deliciously cool," she says to Regy, "though so close to the roof."

"Yes, because the walls are thick, and we haven't had much hot weather yet, but pretty soon, the walls will be baked, and it'll be hot as Tophet up here."

"Reginald!" speaks Miss Cobb, warningly.

"And what will you do then? Go down stairs?" asks Nell, smiling.

"Not much. I go up; sleep on the roof. It's gay I tell you."

"I should think it would be."

"It is. I'll take you up there some day. It's a rambling place, full of pit-falls and towers," says the boy. "Hullo, Les, are you crying?" he continues, catching sight of his sister in the window.

"No, I'm thinking," replies the girl.

"And I know what about," says Regy, thrashing

his arms about. "You needn't be afraid to talk out before me. You're furious because Blanche is going to stay. Isn't she, cousin Dorothy? Come now."

"Reginald, I thought you were more of a gentleman than to talk so before your sister's guest," says Miss Cobb severely.

"O, hang it! who can be a gentleman with a sprained ankle," says the boy wearily; "and the Fourth right upon us as you might say."

"You can pretend you have the gout," says Nell comfortingly.

"Pretend nothing," interpolates Regy.

"Gentlemen with the gout are never expected to keep their tempers, you know," continues the girl, "and oh, Regy, I have an idea!" she adds brightening.

"What, Miss Valentine; something about the Fourth?"

"Yes; you shall celebrate it on the roof."

"Hurrah!" cries the boy, waving the flageolet beside him.

"You shall, and we'll have your friends and an awning—"

"And lots of iced lemonade and punk," adds Regy wildly; and while the two continue to elaborate their plan, Miss Cobb lays down her work, and walks to Leslie's window.

"Well, dearie."

"Well, cousin Dorothy. Isn't it a disappointment?"

"A real disappointment. But we must learn to

bear discipline in this world. It is what we ought to have expected. A generous man like your father is an easy creature for a girl to deceive. Of course she wants to stay here, and be married from here. We ought to have expected that. Try to feel as kindly as you can, dear."

But Leslie does not succeed in feeling very kindly. The latent triumph in Blanche Appleton's pale eyes, and the defiant look with which, the next time they meet, she seems to say, "Find fault with me if you can," are extremely exasperating; so, when two days afterward Miss Appleton announces her intention of accepting an invitation to the seaside for a couple of weeks, Leslie says not a word.

"How we shall miss you, Miss Appleton," cries Nell earnestly.

"Thank you, dear," returns the tall lady, stooping to kiss Nell's forehead, as though she were a mere infant. "It sounds delightful to hear you say so, and to think that one person here dislikes to have me go away."

Leslie does not hear, apparently, and the very morning of the Fourth Miss Appleton leaves Fairylands, regardless of the discomforts of the day for travelling. Nell, her devoted admirer, would like to drive to the depot with her, but important business on the roof prevents.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "GLORIOUS FOURTH."

"No woman's head so keen to work its will
But that the woman's heart is mistress still."

—E. C. STEDMAN

MISS VALENTINE'S head and Augustus' hands have arranged everything on that airy height very comfortably for the disabled youth to whom the greatest imaginable earthly ill lies in being unable to celebrate the Fourth of July.

Two other boys of his age join him, and not a boy of them enters with more zest into the mysteries of the day than Nell. She flies about tirelessly, supplying their wants, suggesting new and delightful plans for the evening's display of fireworks, and making herself so generally delightful as completely to win their youthful hearts.

"Isn't she a daisy!" exclaims one of the young gentlemen, watching admiringly the little white figure as it flits among the chimneys to meet Leslie, who appears through the trap-door.

"Are you going to 'come up and be dead,' too?" asks Nell, laughing.

"Don't joke on serious matters. The sun broils down here. What possesses you to kill yourself for these boys. They can get on without you perfectly well."

"Why, bless you, I like it. Come under the awning; the breeze is beautiful."

So Leslie comes and shares Regy's throne under the awning; a throne from which her brother hobbles away very often, unable to be entirely inactive, and the day wears on. Night finds Nell still the center of a little crowd on the house-top, dozens of holes burnt through her white dress, interesting black smudges on face and hands, and a sun-burned nose. The boy who considered Miss Valentine a "daisy" has gone to the village and brought several kindred spirits to participate in the merry-making going on up on "Forrest's roof;" while several friends have assembled on the lawn to witness the display of fireworks. Leslie and Miss Cobb entertain them, while Mr. Forrest superintends Nell, Augustus, and the boys on the roof. Words, pictures, rockets, volcanoes, etc., have burned, burst, and died many times when Nell hears Leslie's voice below, coming up the steps toward the trap-door.

"We're taking our lives in our hands to come up here," it says; "and don't speak to Twinkle too suddenly, or she may shoot a roman candle right in your face."

"Indeed? I'll approach her with the greatest respect then," replies a lazy, well-known voice, whose tone sends so much startled, happy color into Nell's cheeks, that for the moment the sunburn doesn't matter at all, and she falls behind a neighboring chimney in a little, white heap, and wishes that she was not quite so soiled.

"Twinkle!" calls Leslie, as she moves away over the roof, searching for her friend.

"Now is my chance," thinks Miss Valentine, and quick as thought she rises, and makes a bound for the trap-door, encountering a heavy body with such force, that were it not for the fact that it is a heavy body, and she a light one, must infallibly precipitate them both down the open trap. As it is, the larger body stands firm, and involuntarily receiving the smaller one in an ardent embrace, says calmly, "Miss Valentine, I believe."

Miss Valentine is speechless and dizzy. She does not even endeavor to regain her perpendicular, so Mr. Laible still holds her in one arm, as he speaks:

"Miss Forrest warned me that you might shoot me with a rocket, but she gave me no warning—none at all—of your shooting yourself at me in this dangerous way. Do you know the fine for assault and battery?"

Nell stands away at this, and the darkness kindly throws its mantle over the blemishes in her personal appearance.

"O, dear!" she says, catching her breath, "how you frightened me!"

"Well, that's rather good. I frightened *you*, did I?"

"I should think so; isn't—isn't it a beautiful evening?"

Nell has been looking forward ever since last seeing him, to the possibility of meeting this man at Fairylands, and has planned a hundred times how

she will meet and what she shall say to him, and now no subject but the weather suggests itself to her darkened mind, and it is the merest question of time before he will see her looking more like a belated, overworked fireman than a Christian young lady.

Before Mr. Laible can give his opinion on the weather, Leslie advances.

"Oh, *here* you are. I've looked all over the roof for you, and I'm so provoked, for I wanted to see you meet. How did you happen to see her, Mr. Laible?"

"We met by chance, the usual way," he replies.

"Didn't he surprise you, Twinkle?" asks Leslie, triumphantly.

"I think we surprised each other," replies Nell, laughing heartily, and coming out of the maze, somewhat.

Another head appears in the trap-door at this moment, ducking immediately, then peering carefully out again.

"O, come up, Mr. Lamkin," says Leslie.

"I wish you'd mention to that careless fellow over there that he'd better point those cannon crackers in another direction," squeals Mr. Lamkin in a rage, carefully emerging from the stairway. "The sticks from the rockets are falling so thickly about the grounds that I didn't dare to stay there, positively didn't dare, Miss Forrest, and coming up here, danger stares me in the face in another direction. O!" with a deep groan, "I shall be glad

when this day is over. Really," he adds to Leslie in a confidential aside, "if I digest anything for a week to come, I shall be astonished. Isn't the Fourth a dreadful day, Mr. Laible?" he finishes, appealing to Tom.

"Undoubtedly," responds that gentleman; "you are a homeopath, are you not?"

Nell thinks of the valerian bottle which was several times brought into requisition in the mountains.

"Dear me, no," she says, making a wry face.

Eustace turns upon her fiercely, then back to Tom.

"I am anything that serves my purpose," he replies eagerly, scenting a possible novelty in remedies.

"You know the homeopaths believe in turning for help to 'the hair of the dog that bit you.' Why don't you hold a cannon fire-cracker in your hand, and let it explode? I've no doubt it would give tone to your system, and cause you to digest stones."

"He, he," laughs Mr. Lamkin with rather poor grace; "you believe in heroic treatment, I see."

"Come down stairs, Twinkle," says Leslie, "Mr. Laible can not stay long."

Nell, forgetting her personal appearance, goes first down the trap. Her friends are following, when she reaches the dimly lighted first landing and meets Frank Favernel. It is their first sight of one another, but were it not, the fact of her meeting him yesterday would not help Nell to-night, for, since then, his short, thick beard has disappeared,

leaving only the mustache, and to all appearances it is Douglas Favernel whom she advances cordially to greet.

"I might have known," she says, "that Mr. Laible would not come without you."

If a handsomely attired, pretty girl should accost him thus unexpectedly, Frank Favernel would doubtless meet her gracefully, and soften her mistake as best he could. As it is, he sees a strange face with a smudge on one of its cheeks, black hair blowing wildly about, a figure clothed in a soiled, burned dress, and in the suddenness of the attack, it is not to be wondered at that he entirely forgets the probable connection of his brother with the affair, and takes Nell for one of the house-servants who has taken too much in celebration of independence. As Leslie and Laible come in sight, he is drawing back haughtily from Nell's proffered hand, and muttering something uncomplimentary as he pushes by her.

"Well, Favernel, old fellow, you thought better of it after all, and followed me," says Laible, advancing, and laying a hand on the shoulder of his supposed friend.

Laible with his immaculate clothes, and good-looking face can not be an intoxicated servant, and in a flash the truth enters Favernel's mind. He turns quickly to where Nell has stood, but her white dress is just disappearing down the stair, so he smiles pleasantly upon Mr. Laible, saying:

"You take me for my brother, perhaps, sir."

The other steps back bewildered, and Leslie laughs and scans Frank Favernel's changed face.

Laible turns very red. This is the man against whom he has a strong prejudice, yet it is his friend, and in spite of himself the suspicion assails him that a practical joke is being played upon him, and momentarily he expects Favernel's face to lose its serious, courteous expression and break into a hearty laugh at his bewilderment.

Leslie comes to the rescue, and performs an introduction.

The gentlemen bow ; Tom with a stiffness in ludicrous contrast to the cordiality with which a moment before he accosted the new-comer, then he turns to Leslie :

"I must make my adieux, Miss Forrest."

"So early!" she says, leading the way down stairs to the main hall, while both gentlemen follow. "You have not yet met my father, and he will soon be through with the fire-works—"

"I understand there is a train at about this time," says Laible, "that will take me to town, and as my business will detain me in Boston for a few days, I shall give myself the pleasure of calling again."

"You must," returns Leslie. "Come to-morrow to dinner. My father and Miss Valentine will both wish to see you."

"Miss Forrest," says Tom, standing hat in hand in the hall, "I have a gentleman friend with me in Boston."

"Yes," says Leslie, in the pause that follows, while a bright color flames into her cheeks.

"Have you mentioned to your father meeting us—meeting me in the mountains?" he asks doubtfully.

"No, I have not spoken of you."

"Well—about this friend," resumes Laible, looking into his hat. "He's a fine fellow; he is,—in fact he is a relative of the gentleman to whom you have just introduced me. There is a strong family resemblance between them."

Leslie struggles so hard for sobriety that the tears come into her eyes.

"I don't feel quite like leaving him, to-morrow. The fact is," says Tom, looking up boldly, "if it wouldn't be asking too much, I should like to bring him out to dinner with me."

The tact and dexterity with which the speaker has grasped this bull by the horns, find favor in Miss Forrest's sight. There is a world of demureness in eyes and lips as she replies:-

"Certainly. We shall be most happy to see your friend."

Then Mr. Laible departs, and Leslie turns to Frank Favernel, who has remained standing by the stairs, where he is examining a bronze Mercury upholding a globe of light.

"I had wished to see your father on a matter of business, Miss Forrest," he says, turning to her with a smile, not like Douglas' rare, beaming expression, Leslie feels. "I see I am not likely to find

the opportunity. Will you please tell him that to-morrow afternoon I shall call here to see him."

Leslie hesitates a moment, her eyes bent upon the lowest ruffle of her long white dress.

"I understand, Mr. Favernel," she says, "that there exists a coldness between you and your brother, and I think I ought to inform you that Mr. Laible, who is his friend, has asked permission to bring him out here to-morrow, to dine."

Frank Favernel assumes the disgusted, injured expression which the mention of his brother always evokes.

Leslie, facing him, resents the look.

"And—did you give the permission, Miss Leslie?" he asks.

"That goes without saying, Mr. Favernel," she responds, quickly. "We bear your brother no grudge."

"In other words, you warn me off the premises for to-morrow," says Favernel, his temper getting the better of his discretion.

Leslie's brown eyes sparkle back at him.

"That is as you like," she says haughtily. "Nothing must occur here to annoy your brother."

Before Favernel can reply, Miss Cobb comes into the hall. Leslie, turning, greets her, and introduces the guest. His slight acknowledgment of the house-keeper may be owing to his perturbed state of mind. That Miss Dorothy does not like his manner is evident, as she hurriedly withdraws.

Leslie scarcely notices.

"You are right, Miss Forrest," Favernel says, frankly, when they are alone. "I was presumptuous to speak as I did; but I have told your father about my brother, and I thought after that, Douglas would scarcely be made welcome where I had been."

Leslie, looking very tall and determined, strikes the palm of her hand with her closed fan, as she replies: "There are two sides to every story."

"And to-morrow you propose hearing the other side, perhaps," returns Favernel, unable to keep the sneer out of his voice.

"By no means," says Leslie, her short upper lip curving. "The story has no interest for me from any point of view."

Favernel looks a little frightened. He remembers that for Blanche's sake as well as his own, there must be no break here.

"We have quarreled, Miss Forrest," he exclaims, "entirely through my fault. Forgive me and I will not transgress again."

Leslie lays her hand in his outstretched one.

"I never quarrel," she says sweetly. "Shall I give your message to my father?"

"Yes, and I am quite conscious of all I bind myself to in saying so. Good night."

"Good night."

Left alone, Leslie runs up to her room, and taking refuge on the little bamboo lounge, goes over the above conversation in her own mind, and scolds herself for her partisanship.

"Two sides to every story."

She recalls vividly enough Douglas' side, as set forth by Nell after Tom's recital, but she also recalls that her enthusiasm for justice has never led her to inquire into Frank's side. She is interrupted in her irritating meditations by a knock at the door.

CHAPTER XIV.

LESLIE'S DISCOVERY.

"More true and sure
Each man's heart seems, more firm for right ;
Each man I hold more strong in fight
Since he stands ever in my sight,
So brave, so pure."—Mrs. H. H. JACKSON.

LESLIE sits up quickly, and in answer to her "Come in," Twinkle puts her small, black head in at the door.

"Are you sure I'm not intruding?" she asks.

"Perfectly."

"Something's the matter," says Nell, still holding the door ajar, doubtfully.

"Well?"

"Well—ar'n't you going to tell me if there is?"

"Twinkle, come in and shut that door."

At this stern command, Nell feigns to tremble until the door handle rattles.

"Please, ma'am, I'll be good."

"Yes, I think you will when I have done with you. Do as I say."

Nell closes the door obediently, and trails across the room in her gray wrapper to an ottoman, which she brings close to Leslie, then seats herself.

"I have a lecture for you, my dear," begins the latter, "a guide for future conduct. When one

person in this world sees another looking blue, or tearful, or in any way unhappy, what does that person invariably do?"

"Asks the other what the matter is."

"Right. Now that's wrong," says Leslie, emphatically.

"How can it be if it's right?" asks Twinkle with wondering innocence.

"Don't interrupt the lecturer. When a person feels so badly about something that she can not keep the traces of her grief out of her face, it is presumable that the trouble is one of some depth."

"Hear, hear," interrupts Twinkle, flippantly.

"If the trouble is of some depth, the sufferer isn't likely to want to talk about it to Tom, Dick and Harry."

"To Tom one might," says Nell, with both hands on her heart.

"So when a person is crying, or blue, is the time to let her alone; not to persecute her with questions. If she wants to confide in anyone, she will do so unsolicited."

"Leslie," says Twinkle with owlish solemnity, "when I wink my left eye—so, it means, won't you confide in me unsolicited?"

"I wasn't talking about myself," says Leslie, leaning back among the blue satin cushions. "I am neither blue nor crying. I was talking on general principles. What is that box you have in your lap?"

"Cold cream for my nose," replies Nell, survey-

ing that sunburnt feature in a hand-glass. "It *must* get well. Wasn't it too bad, I looked such a fright that I couldn't go down-stairs with Mr. Laible? When is he coming again?"

"To-morrow to dinner."

"Leslie!" and Nell lays down the hand-glass in real dismay. "My nose will light up the whole room."

"He is—" Leslie hesitates a little—"He is going to bring a friend with him."

"Mr. Favernel?"

"I believe his name is Favernel."

Nell stares a minute seeming to digest her friend's manner.

"I do hope you mean to treat him decently," she bursts out at last.

"Do I usually treat strangers indecently?"

"O Leslie! What's the use?" asks Nell, perplexed. "I suppose I should make a terrible mistake if I mentioned to your father that we met Mr. Favernel in the mountains."

Leslie is silent.

"Such obstinacy and revengefulness! You're a regular *Indian*!" exclaims Nell hotly.

Leslie laughs, the merriest, most natural laugh in the world, as she points a taper finger of scorn at Nell's scorched countenance.

"I leave it to any unbiased observer," she says, "if you do not resemble the noble red man more than I do."

Nell lifts the hand-glass, and takes another rueful survey.

"Well, I for one shall be glad to have the taste of that other Favernel taken out of my mouth," she says. "The expression he put on when I sailed up to him so confidently, almost turned me to stone—the most hateful, haughty, sneering look I ever saw. I knew in a moment who he must be, and remembered how I looked, and simply flew down-stairs. I can't bear to think of Miss Appleton's marrying him," continues Nell, complacently patching her nose with cold cream.

"Perhaps she won't," suggests Leslie with raised eyebrows.

"But the way I astonished him was *nothing* to the way I astonished Mr. Laible," and Nell lets her hand-glass sink into her lap as she laughs aloud, showing all her little, irregular, white teeth.

"Why how did you astonish him?"

"Only made a battering ram of myself, and nearly knocked him down-stairs," and Nell laughs again—a laugh that Regy hears through the open window in his turret and recognizes with a smile, and a mental assertion that Miss Valentine is no end of a trump. "I thought you and he had gone to find me, whereas you went alone, and in my hurry to get down-stairs unseen, and make myself presentable, I ran against him."

"Are you having a good time here, Twinkle? We don't do anything in particular for you, except let you nurse the sick," says Leslie lazily.

"A good time! Don't you know that every breath I draw at this place is a good time in itself,

Leslie? What did—what did Mr. Laible say to you? Did he tell you any news?"

"No," returns Leslie, smiling curiously. "I begin to suspect, Twinkle, that you are a girl of one idea."

"I am," asserts Miss Valentine, rising. "The whole aim of my life at present, is to banish the sunburn from my countenance at the earliest, possible moment."

"Twinkle!" exclaims Leslie, detaining her friend, and seizing her hand while she looks into her face with playful scrutiny. "If I should wink with my left eye—so—would it have any effect?"

"Nonsense," says Nell, pulling her hand away. "Good-night, Leslie, I'm too sleepy to sit up another minute," and so saying, Twinkle hurries from the room, cutting her visit short, because unwilling to meet the eyes that follow her, filled with the dawn of a new and amazing idea.

"That little witch has fallen in love with my hero up in those mountains," says Leslie in great surprise, and with some dismay, staring at the door through which Nell has just disappeared.

Her thoughts run on with the sanguine rapidity of an inveterate match-maker.

"He shall have her," she says softly, but with determination. "Why not?"

And the fruit of her cogitations appears on the following morning, when, instead of allowing her father to be driven to the depot in the coupé as

usual, she insists upon driving him in her "creamy turnout," as Nell calls it.

Leslie takes the reins, her father steps in beside her, and they start off at a good pace.

"There is Nell!" exclaims Leslie, catching sight of a cambric morning dress through the trees. "She is just as happy as a little queen."

"I am very glad. She seems a nice girl, though she appears to greater advantage when Blanche is away."

"How so?"

"Don't look injured, my child. I mean nothing against your favorite. Few women there are who would not look inferior beside Blanche."

"Not in my eyes, father. You can look right into Nell's heart, and that is worth everything."

"I don't know about that. To me it is an additional cause for admiration of Blanche, that she does not wear her heart on her sleeve. You know, dear, the expression can refer to other things than love affairs," adds Mr. Forrest, noticing that Leslie looks resentful.

But she thinks of his words, and many trifles recur to her with new meaning.

"I believe poor Nell's heart is on her sleeve, and was all the time we were away, and I was too dull to notice it. I hope Mr. Laible was as unobservant."

"I shouldn't mind this every morning," says Mr. Forrest, breaking silence. "Your ponies have a good gait; only be sure to exercise them enough."

"Don't fear for that while Nell is here," laughs Leslie. "By thê way, I nearly forgot to tell you that Mr. Laible, a gentleman whom we met in the mountains, is coming out here to dinner this evening, and has asked permission to bring a friend. Also, Mr. Favernel asked me to tell you that he would be out this afternoon."

"Good. We shall have quite a party," replies Mr. Forrest pleasantly. "Have I heard you speak of this Mr. Laible?"

Leslie's confusion and access of color upon this simple question are easily misunderstood. Her father looks at her sharply, and feels a pang of anxiety.

"I don't believe I have," she replies, biting her lip and touching the ponies with her whip. "He came out last evening, but you were so occupied that he went away without seeing you."

"Do you think he was disconsolate at that circumstance?" inquires Mr. Forrest, sarcastically.

"I know he was very sorry," returns Leslie. "He is very anxious to meet you. He seems to hold you in the greatest admiration."

Mr. Forrest's smile is at once skeptical and cynical, but his daughter does not see it.

"He is a young New York lawyer, and a *very* attractive man."

Mr. Forrest's groan is nearly inaudible. It is strange that his little Leslie can have entered womanhood without his noticing when she crossed

the line. Her next remark strikes him with a positive chill.

"Father, I want you to take a liking to this young man," she says, her eyes fixed on a silver ornament in the harness.

"Why, for instance?" is the stern reply.

"Because he needs you," continues the girl unabashed, but blushing. "I have been thinking," here the red grows deeper, "how much you might do for Mr. Laible, if you would."

"In what way?"

"In the way of business, father. I have an idea that he is poor, and it must be such hard, slow work for a young man to make a reputation in a great place like New York. Say you will, for my sake. I don't know exactly how you can do it, but you can, I know, if you will," and Leslie gathers both reins into one hand in order to squeeze her father's, and force him into acquiescence, as she has often done before.

She is surprised to see him so grave, so troubled.

"Don't be imaginative, Leslie; these things are not accomplished so easily as you think. You do not wish me to give him charity, I presume."

"Father!"

The little ponies come alongside the depot platform, and the gentleman alights.

"Good-by!"

"Good-by, dear little girl, and thank you."

"Think about what I've said."

Mr. Forrest does not reply, but he considers it

highly probable that he shall think of nothing else all day.

Leslie drives home with her thoughts still busy.

"Father is right. Unless Mr. Laible be worthy, it is beyond his power to help him," and she thinks rather ruefully of the nonchalant, lazy manner which distinguishes the young lawyer in his social relations.

"O, he must wake up and be somebody, and marry Twinkle, and carry her away from Brenton, to live happily ever afterward!" and Leslie touches the ponies with the whip, while they carry her in grand style up the sweep to the *porte cochère*, where she alights, and runs in, in search of Nell—Nell who has become an object of interest to be studied and watched as one would read a wonderful book.

But Leslie is doomed to extract very little satisfaction from the study; for Nell, since the previous evening, is on her guard, careful of her words and looks. None the less does her friend constitute herself her earnest ally, and Leslie flies about the house all day, singing, arranging flowers, giving cousin Dorothy dainty, brief hugs, and behaving altogether in so unusual a manner, that Miss Cobb wonders what the cause may be; finally deciding that it is a reaction of spirit, occasioned by Blanche's absence.

"Look as sweet as you can, cousin Dorothy," orders Leslie, imperatively, "and be very gracious to Mr. Laible, for I like him especially."

Miss Valentine does not look up from the calla lily she is filling with violets. They have changed

places, for the time, Leslie and she, and her words and looks are quiet and sedate.

"Mr. Frank Favernel and his brother quarreled about money, didn't they?" asks Miss Cobb, with characteristic abruptness.

Nell nods assent.

"What a pity," remarks the housekeeper.

"Not entirely," puts in Leslie. "It is less embarrassing for their friends, to have them keep apart. Now I think we may rest from our labors," she continues, looking critically at the decorations of smilax and flowers upon which the three have been busy.

"The rooms are lovely."

"Well," continues Miss Dorothy, upon the old subject, "the Lord makes no two faces precisely alike. You will find when you see the two together, that you can distinguish them," and the housekeeper nods wisely as, the time growing late, the three go to their rooms to dress.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE "COMET."

"Stay, stand apart; I know not which is which."—COMEDY OF ERRORS.

LESLIE, half defiant, half ashamed, takes particular pains with her toilet this afternoon, and when it is completed, and she is sufficiently bewitching to turn the head of any man, she does penance for her weakness by sitting down with a deep and learned book, utterly unfit for perusal under an aspiring thermometer, and stirs not, even when wheels and voices warn her that her father and the guests have arrived.

It would be happier for Miss Dorothy if the young hostess were more prompt; for, going down stairs, followed by Nell, the housekeeper goes into the drawing-room, and hesitates as she looks at the only occupant. It is Frank Favernel, turning over a book of engravings, and nursing the smouldering wrath within him.

Miss Cobb, whom Nell has told that Douglas Favernel is expected, walks up to him and holds out her hand as she greets him.

Twinkle enters the door just in time to see the supercilious glance which Frank in his ill-temper turns upon the housekeeper—a look which does not take cognizance of her outstretched hand.

Just then he catches sight of Nell, and steps forward with a changed expression.

"Miss Valentine, I presume," he says politely. "I am Frank Favernel. Will you allow me to introduce myself, and beg a thousand pardons for my rudeness of last evening. Mr. Forrest has taken my brother and his friend out upon the piazza. Before you join them, will you not shake hands with me in token of forgiveness?"

Nell draws back a step.

"It seems to be the fashion not to shake hands at Fairylands," she says pointedly. "Your mistake of last evening is easily forgiven. Shall we go out on the piazza, Miss Cobb?" she continues with a marked air of deference, and Frank Favernel looks wrathfully after their retreating forms.

He is in the same position a few seconds later, when Leslie comes slowly down stairs and catches sight, through the half-closed door of the drawing room, of its solitary occupant. Her heart beats a shade faster. Which Favernel is it, standing there? With a sudden impulse she turns aside, and goes out doors, the sound of voices guiding her around to the west side of the house, where her father, Miss Cobb, Nell and the guests are seated on the wide piazza.

Mr. Forrest's face grows grave as Leslie draws near. He watches anxiously and critically the cordial greeting which passes between her and Laible. The expression of lazy indifference which is Tom's normal one has entirely disappeared, and he looks with some embarrassment from his young hostess to

Douglas Favernel, who, rising from his chair, meets Leslie's eye with a direct, grave gaze, in which there is a suspicion of amusement.

There is not sufficient of the suppliant in his look to please Miss Forrest, and when after a scarcely perceptible pause Laible presents his friend in due form, she bows with ceremonious politeness.

"What a farce!" exclaims Nell, *sotto voce*.

Mr. Forrest hastens to speak in order to do away with the uncordial impression produced by his daughter's manner.

"I made the acquaintance of these gentlemen on the train, Leslie, first making the customary mistake. I suppose that is to be expected. Mr. Favernel,"—as he calls he opens the screen door, and Frank comes out, "I'm sure Leslie, you will wish to see these gentlemen together; it is a curiosity. How is it with you, Dorothy, do you think you could easily tell them apart?"

Miss Cobb is burning with righteous indignation over the scene in the parlor. Miss Appleton's supercilious airs have been a daily cross to her, and now to find that young lady's *fiancé* so ready to treat her as he would a presuming inferior, is too much. Twinkle's ready wit has probably taught him a lesson that he will remember, but Miss Dorothy thinks proper to clinch the argument.

"Perhaps in future I may," she replies coolly, "but I met Mr. Frank Favernel in coming through the house just now, and I certainly did mistake him for a gentleman."

A little stir runs through the group. Mr. Forrest frowns slightly, and clears his throat. What evil spirit possesses the ladies of his family to-day?

"Why—ahem—then Dorothy, if you mistook Mr. Favernel for his brother, you must have met Mr. Douglas Favernel before."

Something very like consternation seizes Miss Cobb. To thwart Leslie even in her foolish caprice is misery to her. She glances furtively at the girl whose lovely face awaits her reply with apparent indifference.

"Yes, I have some acquaintance with Mr. Douglas Favernel," she says, stiffly.

"And I," adds Twinkle, coolly; "we met him in the mountains—all but Leslie; she wasn't introduced to him."

"Ah, that is it," and Mr. Forrest turns toward his daughter. "Mr. Douglas Favernel is manager for a firm in New York who are clients of mine, so we find that we have many interests in common."

Here dinner is announced. From the dining-room opens a freshly adorned conservatory, in the midst of which a small fountain plashes musically. A bullfinch, whose gilt cage shines out among the gay red and green of the geraniums, tunes up a gay waltz as the company enter.

It is a charming, home-like scene. Twinkle forgets to lament Miss Appleton's absence in her serene content. She is looking well to-night, in a thin costume of pale gray, ornamented with tiny bunches of cardinal flowers. Her little heart-awakening of the night before has had its effect. She is somewhat

subdued, and very happy, because Tom Laible is beside her. Reginald, able to be down stairs, sits on her other hand, and realizes resentfully that to-day he can not monopolize Miss Nell as usual.

Mr. Lamkin enters the room a little late, and with a mournful air, seats himself next Miss Cobb.

Mr. Laible turns to his neighbor with a comfortable appreciation of her prettiness.

"What has Fairylands done to you, Miss Valentine, that you are so pensive?"

"Enchanted me, of course," returns Twinkle, while Regy grows more indignant.

"Pensive," he thinks, "I wonder what he would have said if he had seen her on the roof yesterday!"

"What did you do yesterday Mr. Laible?" he asks aloud, speaking across Nell.

Mr. Laible does not relish the interruption.

"Yesterday, sir? yesterday?" he repeats, raising his eye-brows thoughtfully.

"Why, the Fourth!" exclaims Regy, disgusted, "you must remember."

"Ah yes; you're right, I do remember. I smoked—smoked as steadily as one of your pieces of punk."

"And is that all?" asks the boy, disdainfully.

"No, that is not all, but I don't like to tell the rest for fear of injuring Miss Valentine's feelings. She passes for a very gentle, humane sort of person here, doesn't she? She doesn't make use of personal violence as a rule?"

Regy grunts. He does not approve of Mr. Laible.

"Where did you disappear to last evening, Miss Valentine?" resumes Tom. "It would have been only kind in you to have bade me good-night after injuring my finer feelings, and the set of my vest as you did."

Nell smiles: "I haven't begged your pardon yet for that, have I? and I think, upon the whole, I won't. It was a mutual injury."

"See Mr. Lamkin gaze at us," she continues. "I suspect that he is thinking of your cruel prescription of last night. What must he think of you!"

"My dear Miss Valentine, I have told you that no one thinks well of me—it is fate;" and Mr. Laible drinks his wine with becoming resignation. "What is he doing here?"

"Reading law with Mr. Forrest."

"Lucky beggar!"

"Why do you say so?"

"It is as good as a fortune to be associated with a man like Mr. Forrest. One ought to reap great benefit from such an advantage. Well, the lame and the lazy are always provided for."

"How that must relieve you," says Twinkle, looking up archly.

"Me? Yes," returns Laible, absently. "How exquisite Miss Forrest is to-night."

Nell flushes and looks across at her friend. Yes, it is patent to any one and every one who may see her that Leslie is exquisite. Seated between the Favarnels, she is succeeding in talking to them both

in a way which compels them to talk to one another—an easy matter, evidently, so far as Douglas is concerned. Indeed the eagerness with which he meets his brother's slightest word is touching. Often Leslie's eyes wander to the end of the table where Tom and Nell are sitting, and her face lights with a complacent glow as she thinks of all she intends doing for the pair. Mr. Forrest, marking these happy glances, places his own construction upon them, and it is beginning to be not entirely an unpleasant construction. His interest, however, in his twin guests is for the time absorbing.

"I hope you young men will pardon my staring," he says, studying them attentively. "I am deciding on points of difference between you for future use."

"I think I shall only have to look hard at them after this," remarks Leslie, "and then I can proceed gracefully. There are several points of difference in their features now, that they are seen together."

"I hope you can also pardon personal remarks," says the host with a laugh.

Leslie shrugs her shoulders. "That is the least they can do in return for making their friends so much trouble."

"It isn't the trouble alone, Miss Forrest," remarks Laible, gravely. "It gives one such a dissolute feeling—makes him feel as though he were seeing double you know."

The doubles laugh. "I for one, am beginning to

experience a great weight of guilt," says Douglas. "How is it with you, Frank?"

"The fault is certainly mine," returns Frank, "for I violated our tacit agreement."

Not one person at the table save, perhaps, Mr. Lamkin, who is mixing some colorless liquid with his drinking water, fails to be impressed by the difference in the manner of the two brothers. Douglas is so hearty, Frank, so constrained.

Twinkle makes a significant little grimace as she looks up at Tom.

"Precisely. I agree with you," returns that young man, sapiently.

Upon rising from the table there is a general movement out of doors. Mr. Forrest draws Miss Cobb aside.

"I have something on my mind that I wish to talk to you about," he begins, crossing his hands behind him and walking beside her across the lawn.

"He can't stand the Lamkin any longer," thinks Miss Cobb, but she characteristically waits in silence for her cousin to proceed.

"Leslie is no longer a child!" announces Mr. Forrest, abruptly.

"Is that your discovery?" and Miss Cobb smiles with some contempt for the male sex in general.

"I did not realize it until this morning, blind that I have been. She is a beautiful woman."

"She is," echoes Miss Cobb heartily, looking across to where the five young people stand together.

"You women are apt to have romantic ideas," pursues Mr. Forrest, "still if you had seen Leslie forming an attachment for any one, it seems to me, Dorothy, that you are not the woman to keep silent on the subject."

"Well you are only just to me, Henry," acknowledges Miss Cobb, with that complacency which springs from a clear conscience.

The narrow scrutiny with which Mr. Forrest has been regarding her, gives place to a perplexed frown.

"Well, I declare," he exclaims, "either Leslie has been very sly or you have been very obtuse."

"Leslie sly! What an idea!" says Miss Dorothy with the indignation due to both accusations.

"I am not going to blame you," says Mr. Forrest, soothingly. "Without doubt you performed your duties of chaperone according to your best light."

"Henry Forrest," says Miss Cobb, "what are you hinting at I should like to know? If you think she *cared* for Mr. Favernel even with all his attentions——"

The lawyer turns around sharply.

"I thought you said she did not meet him."

"Mercy-what-have-I-done!" exclaims Miss Dorothy.

Mr. Forrest is frowning upon her with the look that has been the undoing of many a hapless witness, but it is no feeble spirit who is facing him now. No wise intimidated, the housekeeper heaves a sigh and speaks.

"I may as well tell you that we met Mr. Favernel in the mountains——"

"Which you have told me before," interrupts Mr. Forrest in a professional tone.

"Do you wish to hear what I have to say, or not?" asks Miss Cobb, with some asperity.

"O go on, go on," says Mr. Forrest, leniently.

So Miss Cobb relates the story, suppressing only the gentlemen's doubts of Leslie's sanity.

"Well, it hurt the child's pride," she says, in closing. "And it was only as a stranger that she consented to meet Mr. Favernel to-day. You must not appear to know anything of this."

Mr. Forrest has been interested and amused by the anecdote. "I will keep my own counsel," he promises. "So in all the days you were together you did not see that my daughter looked favorably on Mr. Laible?"

"Why yes, favorably enough," says Miss Cobb, indifferently.

"Quite enough," returns Mr. Forrest, drily. "I shall not risk much on the intuition of woman after this. Dorothy, she is in love with him. Now what do you think of that?"

"I think it is the greatest nonsense I ever heard in my life."

"Perhaps you know more about it than Leslie does. She almost told me the fact this morning, and would have quite had I encouraged her, but I wanted time to think."

Miss Cobb sinks upon a rustic seat, near, and looks

helplessly across at the group. Mr. Laible is in the act of striking an attitude with Miss Valentine's eyeglasses on his nose, and appears to offer himself for the housekeeper's dazed inspection.

"I like the man's face," pursues Mr. Forrest, thoughtfully; "and shall immediately inquire into his antecedents. My daughter can afford to please herself in her choice of a husband, if I find everything as it should be."

"HENRY!" exclaims Miss Cobb in the largest capitals.

"Not that I could spare the child," says Mr. Forrest, his eyes still resting affectionately on the young girl. "No other sunshine could ever light my house if her golden head were taken out of it. No, indeed, I shall keep them with me."

"Henry!" murmurs Miss Cobb, this time in a weak, thin voice, which seems all that is left of her.

"I felt as though you ought to know it, in strictest confidence, you understand, in strictest confidence. There will be nothing said or done at present."

"Well that is something," says Miss Cobb, reviving. "I didn't know but that to-morrow had been named for the wedding."

This shaft passes harmlessly over the lawyer's head. He turns, and strolls back to the house in deep thought, his eyes fixed on the ground.

"That, then, is what has been affecting Leslie's spirits all day," thinks Miss Dorothy, still watching Laible, who is now trying the effect of the eyeglasses upon Leslie. The latter, catching Miss Cobb's

eye, throws her a kiss, then says something to her companions, who follow her across the lawn to where the housekeeper is sitting.

"We are going out in the "Comet" for a while, cousin Dorothy, and we want you to come with us."

"I never care to go, you know," replies the housekeeper, quickly.

"Make an exception this time," says Tom. "We'll take the best possible care of you."

"The idea of anyone's taking care of Miss Cobb," laughs Nell.

"Old maids enjoy a little care occasionally," says the lady, smiling; "although if I were to require any on this occasion, I doubt if Mr. Laible could furnish it," but she rises, and as Mr. Lamkin saunters near, takes his arm abruptly, thereby throwing him into a nervous tremor.

"I don't know as there will be room for me, Miss Cobb."

"O plenty of room. Come along."

"I am surprised at cousin Dorothy's consenting," says Leslie, as she and Laible precede the rest of the party down to the little landing. "I think she believes that the boiler of the "Comet" is only waiting for her to come on board, in order to burst."

"It's all my winning manner. She couldn't resist it," explains Tom, affably.

The gay little steamer with its canvas awning stands ready, and the party embarks. Miss Cobb ascends to the tiny upper deck, out of sight of the little engine of which she stands in horror, and

takes up her position at one end of the boat, and as she seats herself she discovers one of the Favernels approaching.

"This is the part of wisdom, Miss Cobb. I wonder why the others show so little taste as to remain below."

"I haven't the least idea which you are," remarks Miss Cobb in mild despair.

"Yes come up. It is a great improvement," calls Leslie, appearing upon the stair, and the others follow her to the upper deck. "Aren't you glad you came, and will you ever refuse again?" she asks advancing and placing both hands on Miss Cobb's shoulder, as the boat steams on between the green river banks.

The breeze lightly lifts the flossy hair from the girl's forehead, the healthy pink tinge flushes her cheek, and Miss Cobb's face as she looks up at her wears a wistful, tender expression, which Leslie has never before seen there.

"She looks as if she were ready to cry," thinks the girl in amazement, and she stoops over the housekeeper, raising her chin, and looking scrutinizingly into her eyes. "Do you want to land, cousin Dorothy?"

Miss Cobb pushes her away.

"Do go and cross-question some one else, Leslie, and let me enjoy things in my own way. Fine residences along here, Mr. Favernel; these banks make wonderfully fine sites for houses—not that I know which you are yet," she finishes in an undertone.

"What good for-nothing eyes you have," says Miss Forrest, "but I will take pity on you," and unfastening a blue ribbon from her dress, she ties it in Mr. Favernel's button hole. "Cousin Dorothy," she announces, "this is Douglas."

"Tender and true," adds Miss Valentine lightly, at the same moment she is thinking, "I never suspected that Leslie could be so capricious."

Nell does not know how stormy an interview took place between these two at their last meeting, or her surprise at the gracious act would be greater.

Frank Favernel frowns in the direction of the pretty tableau formed by the tall graceful girl, her head bent over her work, and his brother, who watches her with a rapt smile.

Leslie, lifting her eyes, colors faintly.

"Thank you Miss Forrest, this is much more becoming than a placard, and that is what I should certainly have been reduced to wearing before long. There is a limit to all things. Yes, Miss Cobb, these residences are beautiful. Do you know if one is by chance for sale? Frank, how would it do for you and me to keep bachelor's hall in one of these homesteads, with a good billiard room, bowling alley and boat house in connection?" and crossing to Frank, Douglas lays a hand on his shoulder with a movement that tells how gladly the half of his kingdom is at the service of this reconciled brother.

"Douglas Favernel is a poor hater," says Laible to Nell in a tone of depreciation.

"But didn't it occur to you a moment ago, Mr.

Laible, that he would make a very good lover?" asks that sharp young person with a quick look into her companion's face.

"When? what?" asks Tom placidly.

"O how tiresome men are!" says Nell, impatiently. "Are you a sportsman, Mr. Laible? Don't those weeds look suggestive of wild duck?"

"You're dodging the question, Miss Valentine, I again ask, when? what?" says Tom calmly. "Evidently I have lost something. I very often do lose something."

"Indeed you have. A whole romance in about six seconds."

"Rehearse it to me, please. That is why I associate with observant young ladies like yourself, it is so convenient upon occasions like the present," says Tom, seating himself by Nell in a camp chair.

"I wonder if you really think I would put the subtle eloquence of a glance, a movement, and a flash of color into clumsy language for the benefit of an obtuse piece of masculine humanity like yourself," returns Nell, with a scornful movement which dismisses the subject. "Not much wonder that Leslie talked about Fairylands while we were away, is it? I'm beginning to lose my points of compass in the turns and twists we are making, aren't you?"

"Don't you know that I always lose my points of compass along with all other commonplace ideas when with you, Miss Valentine?"

"Is it because you go so nearly to sleep? You behave so."

"That's right. That tone sounds natural. Lecture me; I really enjoy having you lecture me. I'm falling off dreadfully because you don't take sufficient interest in me. Do you remember the evening at Umbagog Lake?" asks Laible, leaning toward Nell with anything but a sleepy expression.

"That trip is one of the few pleasant things I have to remember. Naturally, I shall remember it always," replies his companion looking down, and thereby displaying one of her few beauties—the long, thick lashes that shade her bright eyes.

Laible takes the eyeglass that lies in her lap attached to its silk cord, and the girl trembles when his hand brushes hers in the movement. All unconscious, the young man speaks on.

"You wouldn't expect a fellow to retain his points of compass while you wear that distracting arrangement in his vicinity," touching the white shawl with cardinal satin stripes, which is draped over Nell's head and shoulders in a shape to be becoming to any woman, and which lights up the little brunette into bright, piquant prettiness.

There are men who while devouring with their eyes and fervently admiring a woman, can not for their lives lay a finger on the veriest trifle of her dress, or belongings, without taking a clumsy liberty; and there are others, who, without one tithe of genuine feeling, can convey a delicate attention in the restoration of a dropped handkerchief, a caress

in the act of fanning, and who stand no more in awe of the dainty articles of ornament or use which are adjuncts of the feminine toilet, than of their own boot-jacks.

Of the latter class is Laible, and as he touches the shawl, he says, "Always wear that sort of thing. You look well to-night."

Nell blushes with pleasure, and vows inwardly to starve rather than not always be the possessor of a white wrap with red stripes.

"Don't you find it inconvenient being tied to these things?" he continues, holding up the eye-glasses.

"Thank you for your interest," smiles Nell. "How do you know that I'm not sensitive about my infirmity? No indeed, I assure you I find it very inconvenient not to have them tied to *me*."

"They should be chained to you then. Miss Valentine, will you let me give you a chain?"

"No, sir."

"You're decided, aren't you? But you'll think better of it."

"I shall not."

"Then you're a little prude."

"Gentlemen don't call names. I've been well brought up, Mr. Laible," says the girl, demurely; "I don't receive presents from gentlemen."

"But you just said I was not one, so that makes it all right. I shall bring you a chain. And now to return to first principles; won't you tell me about *the little romance*?"

"As I said before, it would be sacrilege to word it."

"Then don't word it. Couldn't you be good enough to glance and flash at me in the same way? You'll find me very appreciative."

Laible's low speech sounds half in earnest, and Nell turns away and rises quickly.

"I have no talent that way," she says. "See Eustace 'flocking all by himself.' Doesn't he look forlorn? I'm going to comfort him," and the dainty little figure in its gray gown, with gay cardinal bunches, glides away in the direction of Mr. Lamkin, who is gazing with dyspeptic gloominess on the bosom of the waters.

"Nice little warm-hearted thing, and pretty as a picture to-night, too," soliloquizes Tom, complacently, as with eyes half shut, he watches the curving banks drift by. "So she noticed it too, and it was not all my imagination. Douglas is in love with his ex-lunatic—this white and gold princess. I wonder how the reverse of the picture looked; had her face been toward us, what would it have told? That great heart of Favernel's tells tales. That's what comes of cutting one's self off from the fair sex half one's life. Douglas Favernel, stern man of business, and anti-society man, turns red and then white, and looks dead loads of love and delight because a pretty girl happens to tie a ribbon in his button-hole."

So thinking, Laible's glance roves to Leslie as she sits by Miss Cobb, talking in a low tone, and breaking now and then into the musical little laugh which

never fails to break the grim lines about the house-keeper's mouth.

"Just the kind of girl to captivate a great-heart. I wonder if it is in her to break it. If I thought so, I believe I would saunter up to the heiress, and throw her overboard. To love once and forever is Favernel's way."

"What a time you have chosen for silent introspection," speaks Leslie's clear voice. "Do you know you are looking more savage every moment? Come, and share your troubles with us."

"Thanks; I was only waiting for an invitation. I should never have dared to interrupt your *tete-à-tete* without one," and Tom draws his chair near the ladies. "I was just thinking that the Favernels on this mite of a boat, look like twin Gullivers enjoying a voyage in Lilliput."

Miss Dorothy smiles her kindest upon this young man for whom a smooth path is being made to her ewe-lamb. She likes him already, and will try to make him like her, that he shall never cut her off from Leslie. "It is a pleasant sight to see those brothers friendly together," she remarks, glancing in the direction of the Favernels who seem deep in conversation.

"Not particularly so to me, Miss Cobb. I have so long accustomed myself to thinking hardly of Frank, that I can not accept all at once the idea of his being received again into his brother's regard."

Miss Cobb makes an involuntary motion with her right hand as though she would grasp Mr. Laible's,

but suddenly recollecting herself, sits up straighter than ever, folding the rebellious hands in her lap.

"It does not suit with what I know of Mr. Douglas' character that he should have given you so deep a dislike of his brother, however faulty the man may be," says Leslie with a straight glance of her long brown eyes across at Laible.

"Bless her heart for taking up the cudgels!" ejaculates the young man, mentally, as he leans forward: "I have hardly heard three words about Frank Favernel from Douglas, Miss Forrest, but the story is well-known in New York where the old uncle died, and the same version of it was in every mouth."

Laible regards Leslie with so awakened and admiring an expression as he speaks, that Miss Cobb looks away in the direction of home, and wishes she were there.

These two young people are actually being obliged to talk across her, and naturally must wish her anywhere, anywhere out of their world. She is about to make a move when the brothers advance. Douglas with one hand holding the lappel of his coat in a way to press closely the blue ribbon.

Leslie looks up at him calmly.

"We were just speaking of you," she says.

"Still harping on that wonderful resemblance?" asks Frank, leaning against the railing in uncomfortably close proximity to Leslie's shoulder.

"No, that is a threadbare subject," she returns without looking at him.

"And rendered entirely uninteresting by the

badge of Miss Forrest's favor which Favernel is covering so securely," adds Laible. "Unhand that piece of ribbon, Douglas. That was intended to be looked at."

"I will display it when anyone questions my identity; never fear. If this were only Autumn now, Miss Forrest, and these clumps of weeds bright bunches of color how gay and picturesque this ride would be."

"Be careful. It is rank heresy to think one season less beautiful than another, at Fairylands," says Leslie. "What could you want better than the still loveliness of this evening? You appreciate now the advantages of an early dinner-hour. One is not obliged to waste the coolest, pleasantest part of the daylight at table. We have reduced living to a science, here, and know how to get the most and best out of every day."

Laible sees the lowering expression that grows on Frank Favernel's face; Laible sees most things in that absent, indifferent way of his.

"By the way, Douglas," says Frank suddenly, "there was one more thing I wanted to tell you about that firm," and the speaker bears his brother off.

"And I must help poor Miss Valentine in her care of the invalid," says Tom in an anxious tone."

"Leslie, I don't trust that man," says Miss Cobb, when they are left alone.

"Not trust Mr. Laible?"

"Yes, yes, indeed," replies Miss Cobb hastily. "I mean that Frank Favernel."

"It is wicked to hate, cousin Dorothy," says Leslie, laughing at the housekeeper's tone.

"I hope I don't hate him," says the other piously, "but O, I do—hate—his—evils," and Miss Cobb finishes with an emphasis and a nervous working of the hands suggestive of the idea that if she should be engaged in a personal encounter with the man, the line between himself and his evils might prove too fine for his salvation.

"He seems determined to keep his brother away from you," pursues Miss Cobb.

"That is an absurd thought," says Leslie, patting her cousin's hand.

"It has happened several times. The instant Mr. Douglas begins talking to you, he carries him off. How do you like such impertinent behavior?"

"Perhaps I can forgive it in consideration of what it saves me," answers Leslie, lazily.

Miss Cobb gives her a wondering stare. "Well, you are a strange girl," she declares at length, "I shall be careful how *I* offend you."

Just before they land, Leslie receives a sharp nemesis for her cruel and dishonest remark. She discovers then that Douglas Favernel has thrown away her bonnie blue ribbon.

"Do look at those evil-disposed twins! They have lost their badge," exclaims Twinkle as the brothers come hurriedly forward, very pale, as all notice but Leslie, who is too absorbed in her hurt at

the slight thus paid her gracious gift before the whole company, to note anything beside.

Ah, woe betide Douglas Favernel during the short remainder of his visit. The ingenuity, and unobtrusiveness, with which his fair hostess manages to make him feel her displeasure, would do credit to a far more experienced brain than hers.

As to Frank, his immediate departure is so great a boon that no one notices the white face and *distract* air with which he takes his leave.

CHAPTER XVI.

MISS COBB'S CONFIDENCE.

"Is that rose of dawning glowing on your cheek
Telling us in blushes what you will not speak?"

—MRS. L. C. MOULTON.

MISS APPLETON'S two weeks have extended into three, and still she does not return to her guardian's roof.

Nell occasionally makes a moan over this continued absence, but the dead silence with which her lamentations are received by Leslie and Miss Cobb, prevents them from becoming profuse. Indeed, Nell finds in these days, that the greater part of her ebullitions of one kind and another are received by Leslie in silence.

"But what of it? Every one is moody sometimes," thinks good natured Nell, and consoles herself with Regy, who is always boisterously glad of her society.

Leslie sits, early one evening, on the piazza, knotting *macramé* lace. Nell and Regy are playing croquet. Mr. Lamkin is taking a brisk constitutional around the grounds, advised by his physicians to follow a half hour's absolute quiet in a reclining posture favorable to digestion. It is no light matter, this attending to the laws of health, and Mr. Lamkin

canters past the house with an expression of grave responsibility on his countenance.

Mr. Forrest comes out upon the piazza, newspaper in hand.

"I think I have some pleasant news for you, little girl," he says.

Leslie looks up and smiles a welcome.

"You never have anything else, dear," she returns, drawing a chair beside her. Mr. Forrest seats himself.

"Blanche is coming home to-morrow," he continues, feeling in an inside pocket in the vague way common to men when seeking for something which they are tolerably certain of not finding, "not," he continues, "that I expect that to be good news to you."

"It must be to me if it is to you," says Leslie, softly.

"Here it is now," continues Mr. Forrest, selecting a squarely folded paper from the loose handful he has drawn forth. "Here is a very pretty note from Blanche. You wouldn't like to read it?"

As Leslie does not contradict this, her father replaces the note with a faint sigh.

"I shall be ready for her," says Leslie with remorseful cordiality, then with a bewitching smile in eyes and dimples, she turns around: "May I not be just a little jealous that you have another daughter?" she asks coaxingly.

"No my dear, you can not even pretend to be jealous of Blanche. O, child," taking his daughter's

hand, "why could you not remain my little Leslie? Why should you wish to leave me?"

"Leave you?" echoes Leslie, affectionately. "I never wish to leave you while I live."

"You are a good child, I haven't a fault to find with you," returns the lawyer with a pre-occupied air.

The girl has seated herself in her father's lap, and, with her arm around his neck, presses her fresh cheek against his forehead.

"And now I will proceed with my news. I have put your friend, Mr. Laible, in the way of adding a considerable sum to his income."

"You're a saint!" announces Leslie, joyfully.

"Yes dear, all right, but don't break down my collar so unmercifully. You remember that I told you Mr. Favernel is manager for a New York firm who are my clients?"

Leslie nods.

"Well, I suggested to Favernel that the business should be put into Laible's hands."

"When did you see him?"

"Yesterday. I didn't tell you, they are both back in Boston. And Favernel laughed, telling me that he had tried already to make the change—to have the business taken from me and given to Laible—but in vain; the partners would not consent. However, I can arrange it, and henceforth Mr. Laible will have a regular income from that firm alone, which is not contemptible for a single man."

"But how would it be," and Leslie holds her father's face between her hands and looks into it with a delightfully demure expression, "if he should decide not to be a single man. Would you get him ever so many more clients and regular incomes?"

Mr. Forrest gazes perforce at her heightened color.

"What a strange girl you are!" he says. "I must say I don't understand your being so mercenary in this affair."

"But I do," responds Leslie, dropping her hands and laughing in hearty enjoyment of her secret. "There is an explanation."

"Your own fortune is large. I am not sure that you understand."

Leslie sobers, and regards her father with wide, solemn eyes.

"O you don't know Mr. Laible," she says. "He seems lazy and indifferent, but he would not take a cent of my money—not one cent."

Mr. Forrest raises his eyebrows and smiles a smile of indulgent amusement.

"Think as well of him as you like, dear, he is all right. I have his whole history from Mr. Favernel—facts which it will be easy to prove or disprove, only I fancy it would be hard to disprove an assertion of Douglas Favernel's—he is a man, now Leslie!" says the lawyer in a different tone, looking reflectively down the lawn where may be seen the hygienic Lamkin toiling up the home stretch.

"Yes papa," says Leslie encouragingly, while

she arranges her father's hair in scallops around his forehead.

"A thorough-going, upright man, honest and generous, beside being cultivated and intellectual—look out for my collar my dear," finishes the lawyer, recapturing the arm which he has unwittingly released. "I seem to come in for a large share of your approbation this afternoon."

"It is so surprising to hear you compliment anyone."

"It is so surprising to find any one worth complimenting. Ah, Leslie, if you could have fancied—but it's all right; and now I come to thirdly and last. I have invited Mr. Laible to spend a few weeks with us. He needs to be with me for a time, in order to understand his new responsibilities."

"Better and better! You little know how you are playing into my hands, Mr. Forrest," says Leslie, joyfully.

"Thank you. If I were so thick-headed as you give me credit for, I think I should retire to private life. Then after I had attended to your pleasure, I looked after my own, and invited Douglas Faverne."

"And he said?" suggests Leslie as her father pauses.

"Well, he said a good many things, but the amount of them was that he didn't wish to come."

Leslie rises and returns to her chair.

"I was determined, though, not to take 'no' for an answer, and fairly pressed him into consenting."

"I wouldn't have done that, father. You are too apt to deprive people of their freedom, in proffering an invitation. We are not reduced to begging people to accept Fairylands' hospitality."

"Well, well; what an icicle we have here all of a sudden! If I had known that it would have been unpleasant to you—his coming—I would not have insisted. But it's too late now; he has accepted."

"What is your idea in having them come?" asks Leslie, tying her knots fast and furiously.

"The idea of making everyone enjoy the lazy month of August as much as possible."

"But Mr. Favernel spoke as though he would enjoy the seaside. Don't you remember his asking you if we were going? I'm sure that he intended passing the rest of his vacation there."

"Yes, he did," says Mr. Forrest in a calm tone very exasperating to his daughter, "but I argued the point with him, and represented how far greater facilities for rest and quiet he would find here, than among the crowd at a watering place."

"I can't tell you how I regret it. What do you suppose Mr. Favernel wants of rest?" asks Leslie scornfully. "The quiet he will certainly find here in plenty. There is nothing, absolutely nothing to interest him, and it will spoil everyone's pleasure to see him moping about here and there in search of something to amuse him. Why couldn't you have let him go?"

Mr. Forrest laughs teasingly. It is quite a new

thing for his daughter to upbraid him in this way and he finds it amusing.

"I did let him go, my love; he went to Rye this morning, but he is under strict orders to remain away only three days, so prepare to receive the martyr and his friend. Let me see; to-day is Thursday; on Monday they will be here. We may have to keep Favernel under surveillance, but I suppose Mr. Laible will not try to escape," and Mr. Forrest takes a mischievous delight in his daughter's haughty attitude.

The inevitable wrangling which takes place when Nell and Regy play croquet, here becomes so audible that Miss Cobb comes out upon the piazza.

"Henry why don't you call Regy," she says. "Just give him a little check, that's all he needs."

"People always quarrel over croquet, don't they?" asks Mr. Forrest abstractedly, running his eyes down the columns of the newspaper.

Miss Cobb gives the lax father a reproachful glance.

"Reginald!" she calls.

The boy in the distance turns, looks at her and turns back again.

"Reginald!" The call this time is so imperative that the boy throws down his mallet with an impatient carelessness that imperils Nell's life and limb, and comes running up, red in the face and breathless.

"Regy," says Miss Cobb with gentle reproach, "remember the golden rule."

"Aw!" exclaims the boy, at the highest pitch of

exasperation. "Why couldn't you holler it!" and is off again.

Mr. Forrest shakes quietly behind his paper. Miss Cobb maintains a stern front for a moment but bursts into a laugh as she re-enters the house. The honest disgust of Regy's tone has proved too much for her.

Leslie continues grave. She works away at her *macramé* as assiduously as though her daily bread depended upon it. Occasionally she takes a long breath. Suddenly she is roused by a voice on the steps beside her.

"'And her sithes were more like groans than common sithes,'" quotes Nell, "I heard you 'way out here. Come and walk. I've beaten Regy three times straight, whitewashed him twice, and he has discovered that croquet is a slow game fit only for girls."

Leslie obeys and the two, arm in arm, saunter down the drive.

"Poor Regy. I suspect it is rather an unpleasant change for him to be defeated. He is accustomed to beating me whenever he chooses. You'll have some one more worthy of your skill after to-day. Blanche returns to-morrow."

"O how glad I am! Why didn't you tell me before?" cries Nell in delight.

"Father just told me of it. And you are pleased?"

"Pleased? Delighted! Think of having her back with her beautiful voice and fascinating smile. You are a princess Leslie, but Miss Appleton is queenly.

When she glides about this house and grounds, I can imagine her mistress of it all."

"So can she, I think," remarks Leslie.

"Not that I wish it were hers. You fit the place as well in a different way, and you will become more commanding and like her as you grow older."

"Do you think so?"

"Don't be sarcastic Leslie. I'll endeavor to restrain my flights of enthusiasm. You are evidently not over pleased with my admiration."

"I am really glad you like Blanche, really very glad."

"Your voice sounds joyful, dear, almost jubilant one might say. Leslie, I can't think things very often without saying them, and will you forgive me if I say that you behave as though you were jealous of your father's ward?"

"Yes, I forgive you."

"Now, you shall not smile in that sad, patient way as though you were the heroine of a tragedy," says Nell, stopping short in the road, and taking her friend by the shoulders. "I've caught you at it a number of times lately, and I say again I won't have it. Come dear," coaxingly, "something annoys you. I know it can be nothing," she finishes incoherently.

"You are right, it is nothing."

"Nothing!" Nell speaks in an accusatory voice.

"Nothing."

"Very well, I'll never tell you anything again. I should think you would be ashamed of yourself,"

exclaims Nell, resuming her walk. "Do you suppose I believe you? You're not the girl you were in the mountains; you laugh, and talk, and eat, but you fall off into reveries, and make eyes out o' the window every chance you get. I shall go home, back to Brenton. I'm a restraint upon you."

"I shall have to be a restraint upon you," laughs Leslie, catching her companion's arm. "I can't walk at this rate. If you'll tell me what trial you want me to confess to, I'll confess to it. Anything to please you."

"Here's one coming toward us. You wish Eustace was in heaven, you know you do."

Before Miss Forrest can speak, the pedestrian has met them with a face flushed but beaming.

"I've hit it this time, young ladies," he exclaims smiting his stomach. "It has commenced to grind already. Third time 'round," and off he goes in hot pursuit of health.

"He is not particularly calculated to raise one's spirits," says Leslie, "but I'm accustomed to him."

"I am not going to catechise you," announces Nell frigidly, making the most of her five feet two and a half of height.

Leslie considers a moment, then says, "You force me to humiliate myself. I confess that I am jealous of Miss Appleton, and dread——"

A little hand clapped over her mouth checks her utterance.

"Forgive me. I am ungenerous. It will all come right, I'm sure. I'll try not to tease you again, only

I can't let you make eyes at space, I can't really."

"I deny the impeachment. I never made eyes at anything or anybody. I don't know how."

"O,—don't—you," says Nell with a pause before each word, as she thinks of the little scene on the steamer, "you don't cast your eyes up at young men when you tie ribbons in their button-holes."

Leslie's manner freezes stiff.

"I shall certainly not select Mr. Douglas Faver-nel to practice the art upon."

"What! Don't you like him either? Are you becoming misanthropic?"

"Like him!—Did you think that I liked him?" asks Leslie slowly and in a lofty tone which Nell immediately imitates in her reply.

"Yes—I thought so—" she says dramatically, "but I will think so—no more!"

"You goose!" says Leslie, smiling much against her will. Miss Cobb comes down the drive toward them.

"What in the world has come over Mr. Lamkin?" she inquires, seriously perplexed.

"Poor Eustace," says Nell, looking after the young man's retreating form, "why he will be fit to enter a walking match after a few more nights of this sort of thing. He is digesting, you know," she explains to Miss Cobb. "Talk about the fate of the Wandering Jew," she continues, as Mr. Lamkin cuts across lots and passes them with the light of a joyful victory illuminating his countenance. "I don't

believe he had to live on Graham mush and Lactopeptine between whiles."

"Your father wants you, Leslie," says Miss Cobb. "I'll take a turn with Nell, and then you come and meet us."

So Leslie departs and the pair of housekeepers continue their promenade.

"Do you know that Miss Appleton returns to-morrow?" begins Nell.

It is not a very pleasant expression which she finds she has brought into Miss Cobb's face.

"I didn't know it," is all that lady vouchsafes, but in a tone that causes Nell to wonder how two people, good and generous like Leslie and Miss Cobb, can withstand Blanche's attractions; and the warm-hearted little simpleton actually congratulates herself that she is here to show the kindness and attention to Miss Appleton, of which that stately woman must surely feel the need.

"Leslie just received word of it from her father," explains Nell, "and Miss Cobb, I have been doing a daring thing this evening."

"What's that, Nell?"

"Taking Leslie to task for her pre-occupation and sadness."

Miss Cobb looks quickly at her companion.

"Then you *have* been doing a daring thing," she replies, in a displeased tone, "a thing which I would not think of doing."

"I don't care, Miss Cobb," returns Nell, bridling, "hasn't it worried you to see the state she is in?"

Of course I don't pretend to be more quick-sighted where she is concerned than you, and well as she has behaved, I know you must have detected a change in her. I accused her on the impulse of the moment, but delicate or indelicate, I'm glad I did it, for she confessed there was something on her mind, and perhaps it will lead her to talk it out. Things are so much more bearable when they're talked out."

"You mean well, Nell, but you've done a clumsy thing this time."

"That is your opinion, Miss Cobb," says the girl rather pertly. "May I ask why?"

"Because girls are not apt to 'talk out' the kind of things that Leslie has on her mind in these days," and there is a smile on the housekeeper's face now—a loving smile that goes with thoughtful eyes and tender good wishes.

"Then you know what is troubling her?" asks Nell eagerly.

"I am really glad, my dear, that you are as slow and obtuse as I was," says Miss Cobb, unbending wonderfully. "I confess her father had to enlighten me; I hadn't a thought of such a thing, and he hadn't either until she told him herself."

"Go on," exclaims Nell. "My curiosity is at the bursting point."

"You mustn't hint it then," says Miss Cobb, "the child doesn't know that I know it, but it is full as well, I think, that you should understand the case. Only mind; no hint of it to any one and especially to Blanche Appleton—"

"No, no," returns Nell breathlessly.

"Well then, Leslie is—I was going to say engaged, but I hardly think it has gone farther than an understanding, and at any rate by their behaviour together, it is plain that they don't wish to attract notice, although Mr. Laible—"

"Mr. Laible!" interrupts Nell with an uncontrollable start.

"Well now, it really pleases me to see you so surprised, for I haven't had a greater shock in a long time. I'm not at all hurt that Leslie has never spoken of him to me. I like to see a girl who can keep her own counsel, but now you see how laughable a mistake you made in taking Leslie's pre-occupation for sadness. I'm not very well versed in the manner of lovers, but I daresay Leslie's manner of taking her happiness is not uncommon. Why, what is the matter?" continues the housekeeper, as Nell stands still, pressing a hand over her eyes.

"One of my blind headaches. I rarely go so long without one as I have here, and it has come suddenly as usual. Please let me take your arm back to the house."

Dorothy Cobb puts on her arm round the little girl that has suddenly lost her way.

"Those headaches are very dangerous," says Dorothy, as she is leading Nell quickly along the passage. Nell turns quite so pale as Dorothy.

"Wait a minute, I'll get an alarm," says Nell.

"Sometimes th

bringing the headache. Let me sit down here a minute."

"Would you like some wine or water?" asks Miss Cobb, seating her charge in a rocking chair.

"Nothing, thank you."

At this moment the door swings open and Leslie appears.

"What is the matter with Nell?" she cries, seeing Miss Cobb lean over her friend's chair.

"She's fighting a sick headache," says the housekeeper shortly, as Nell does not stir or remove her hand from her eyes.

"Use this," says Leslie, putting a vinaigrette into Nell's hand. "I hope the blindness will disappear. We can't let you go back to Brenton until you have quelled those headaches for good."

"I shall be all right presently," says Nell, inhaling the salts, "and I have no excuse to stay away from aunt Lamkin longer. I'm so strong and well that I believe I shall go home to-morrow and surprise them."

"Indeed you should not!" exclaims Leslie. "Go me to should think not. Mr. Laible coming Monday to stay indefinitely. think of that?" and the girl to Nell's white face.

"It will be gayer than ever at and be quite spoiled for home life. It would never do."

"In coming here to stay!" exclaims

"Yes, I must refer you to papa. It was all his doing; but Nell you're no more going to Brenton to-morrow than I am."

"Yes I am, dear. It is no use waiting to be ready to go, I must just tear myself away suddenly. The headache is here after all, and come to stay this time. I must go to bed," and Nell rises, looking as though she must faint before she takes three steps. "Good night to both of you," she says bravely, and is gone.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE "RETREAT."

"He had a way of saying things
That made one think of counts and kings."—LONGFELLOW.

MISS VALENTINE'S headaches are forty-eight hour affairs, and Leslie has her safely a prisoner for the present. The heiress feels desperate at the mere thought of her friend's slipping through her fingers at the moment of all others when, she tells herself, it is so important to have Nell on the spot. Everything is going beautifully; and now, just as so rarely good an opportunity presents itself for Mr. Laible and Miss Valentine to become better acquainted, the latter with incomprehensible perversity wants to vacate the field. It is too much, and Leslie can but look triumphant, as she walks into Nell's darkened room the next morning.

"Do you suffer much?" she asks softly.

"About as usual. It will last till to-morrow morning," responds the other faintly.

"You poor child! I suppose the kindest thing I can do is to leave you alone," replies Leslie moving toward the door. "Nell," coming back on a sudden impulse, "I have to give either Mr. Favernel or Mr. Laible a room upstairs near Regy. Which shall have the better place?"

"I suppose you feel more particular about entertaining Mr. Laible handsomely. I should say Mr. Laible," replies Nell wearily, changing her position on the pillow.

"Mr. Laible let it be," assents Leslie gaily, coming closer to the bed. "You won't be so unkind and tormenting as to insist upon going home soon, will you Nell?" she adds pleadingly. "I want you to know Mr. Laible right well, for I like him very, very much; and then I want you to amuse Mr. Favernel. Won't you be good and obliging?"

A knock at the door interrupts the pair, and the knock is immediately followed by the opening of the door and the appearance of a head peeping in.

"Shall I disturb any one?" asks the new-comer.

"Ah, Blanche, you have come," and Leslie meets her with outstretched hand.

"Miss Appleton!" exclaims Nell, momentarily forgetful of her headache. "I am so glad to see you."

Miss Appleton touches Leslie's hand, then leans over Nell and kisses the aching forehead.

"You ought to be glad to see me," she says; "I tore myself away just as the place was becoming interesting. Who should appear on the scene yesterday but Douglas Favernel. Why are you so dark in here?" she pursues moving to a window and drawing aside the curtain. "I like a shaded room but not one where you must pick your steps. Don't you know that a moderate amount of light is good for the headache, Miss Valentine?"

Nell winces as the shaft of light penetrates the room, and Leslie sees it.

"It will never do in Nell's case," she says quietly as she rearranges the curtain in its old position.

Miss Appleton looks at her in some surprise.

"You know best, but why, Leslie, have you not said more about Douglas Favernel? He is a very attractive man. When I first saw him at the hotel yesterday, it was at dinner time, and I supposed of course Frank had run down to see me, and walked up to him in all the gorgeousness of my dinner costume, and touched him on the shoulder. He turned and looked at me for a moment, then bowed in a grand-seigneur sort of way—"

"That's what I always say," murmurs Nell; "he is king of whatever he surveys."

"Well, it happened to be me that time," continues Blanche, "and I knew almost before he had spoken that at last I was face to face with Frank Favernel's long-talked-of, twin brother, and he said, 'You naturally mistake me for my brother, to whom in this case, I am indebted,' all this with that bow and manner calculated to make you feel yourself in high society."

Leslie listens with interest. She forgets for the moment his offences and only remembers the grave, kind friend she knew in the mountains.

"It was a clear case of 'He began to compliment and I began to grin,'" pursues Miss Appleton, "for I was not to be outdone in courtesy, beside being anxious to attach this very desirable person to our

party, so I introduced myself and insisted upon his dining with us, which invitation he accepted. He has certainly been very hard on his brother, and if I had not made allowances for all I have heard, I could not have inclined favorably to the usurper; but I never forget that there are two sides to every story."

"I hope you will be able to soften Leslie's judgment," says Nell, "she does not admire Mr. Douglas as we do."

"Well, there's no accounting for tastes," says Miss Appleton. "As I said before I would have liked to remain longer at Rye after he came, but having said I should leave at such a time, I did not like to change my plans, so I bade Mr. Favernel good-by, and asked him to call upon me, whereupon he said he thought we were in a fair way to become very well acquainted, as my home was about to become his for a short time. Imagine my surprise and pleasure!"

"How did he speak of it? With resignation?" asks Leslie with slight scorn.

"No indeed. I never saw anyone more pleased with an arrangement than he seemed at that. His face beamed for a moment, and he smiled for the first time in our conversation. What beautiful teeth those men have!"

"Your fascinations did their perfect work then, Blanche. I assure you, you have reconciled him to a disagreeable duty," and Leslie rises from the foot of the bed where she has been sitting. "We must

not talk longer here ; it is bad for that headache. Forgive us, dear, for being selfish," and the pitying face bends once more over Nell, as Leslie sprinkles more *eau de cologne* about the pillow, and then leaves the room preceded by Miss Appleton who yawns as she moves away to take a nap and dream of Douglas Favernel.

She has been brought up in a hard, selfish school, this pale-eyed brunette. It matters little to her that she is pledged to one brother. Since it would be so greatly to her advantage, she will not hesitate to fascinate the other, should such a course prove possible.

Left alone, Nell sets her teeth in a way she takes to still the throbbing in her head. It mingles strangely with the pain in her heart that seems physical. In vain she tries to stay the procession of her thoughts. Surely the ache in her head can never cease while she is trying so hard to put away bitterness and all uncharitableness.

Leslie, who has come to her like a being from a higher sphere, who has heaped benefits upon her little and great, is one whom it has been insanity to hope to rival. Nell turns uneasily. She remembers having heard Mrs. Lamkin say that there is nothing so good to drive away thought, and to induce slumber, as to imagine a huge, black curtain, and to fix one's mind intently upon it. Nell does so, resolutely, with closed eyes, and just as the vision is well placed, the curtain divides in the middle and discloses Leslie and Mr. Laible standing at the altar.

"No, no," returns Nell breathlessly.

"Well then, Leslie is—I was going to say engaged, but I hardly think it has gone farther than an understanding, and at any rate by their behaviour together, it is plain that they don't wish to attract notice, although Mr. Laible—"

"Mr. Laible!" interrupts Nell with an uncontrollable start.

"Well now, it really pleases me to see you so surprised, for I haven't had a greater shock in a long time. I'm not at all hurt that Leslie has never spoken of him to me. I like to see a girl who can keep her own counsel, but now you see how laughable a mistake you made in taking Leslie's pre-occupation for sadness. I'm not very well versed in the manner of lovers, but I daresay Leslie's manner of taking her happiness is not uncommon. Why, what is the matter?" continues the housekeeper, as Nell stands still, pressing a hand over her eyes.

"One of my blind headaches. I rarely go so long without one as I have here, and it has come suddenly as usual. Please let me take your arm back to the house."

Dorothy Cobb puts one arm around the little figure that has suddenly lost its animation.

"Those headaches are bad things," she says, leading Nell quickly along, "and I never saw anyone turn quite so pale with them as you do."

"Wait a minute, perhaps it will prove a false alarm," says Nell when they have reached the piazza. "Sometimes the blindness passes away without

bringing the headache. Let me sit down here a minute."

"Would you like some wine or water?" asks Miss Cobb, seating her charge in a rocking chair.

"Nothing, thank you."

At this moment the door swings open and Leslie appears.

"What is the matter with Nell?" she cries, seeing Miss Cobb lean over her friend's chair.

"She's fighting a sick headache," says the house-keeper shortly, as Nell does not stir or remove her hand from her eyes.

"Use this," says Leslie, putting a vinaigrette into Nell's hand. "I hope the blindness will disappear. We can't let you go back to Brenton until you have quelled those headaches for good."

"I shall be all right presently," says Nell, inhaling the salts," and I have no excuse to stay away from aunt Lamkin longer. I'm so strong and well that I believe I shall go home to-morrow and surprise them."

"Indeed you shall not!" exclaims Leslie. "Go home to-morrow? I should think not. Mr. Laible and Mr. Favernel are coming Monday to stay indefinitely. What do you think of that?" and the girl looks triumphantly into Nell's white face.

"Think? I think it will be gayer than ever at Fairylands. I should be quite spoiled for home life if I were to stay. It would never do."

"Those gentlemen coming here to stay!" exclaims Miss Cobb.

Positively you will oblige me by not incommoding yourself on my account."

So, fearing to make his favorite guest uncomfortable, Mr. Forrest returns to his work against his will.

Tom Laible is deep in an animated conversation with Blanche, so Douglas goes out, much to his own relief, alone.

As he came by, a few minutes since, he noticed the son and heir of the house, prone on the grass, reading, and he approaches him now.

To his astonishment, as he draws near, the youthful reader strikes out with one of his feet and sends the stick which Favernel carries, flying.

"Do go away Blanche; this is so interesting, and you do bother so," says the boy, without lifting his eyes.

"My name is Douglas," returns the young man coolly, reaching after his fallen property.

"O, Mr. Favernel, I beg your pardon," says Regy, rolling over on his back and laughing, as he looks up.

"You are not very complimentary to Miss Appleton's fairy footfall," continues Favernel, dropping on the grass beside the boy, and then they both laugh.

"Pooh, she's as big and heavy as an elephant," says Regy with the beautiful candor of youth. "My girl is the one with the fairy footfall," he finishes in the tone of a connoisseur.

"Who is that," asks Favernel, amused.

"Miss Nell. She's a daisy, except when she's playing croquet," and Regy finishes with a gloomy shake of the head.

"Good deal of temper, eh?" asks Douglas sympathetically.

"Ho, yes, she laughs at me until I'm in a perfect rage."

"But with all her faults you love her still?"

"Yes sir. It's awfully dull to have her sick."

"So it is. No doubt you miss her very much."

"Yes, and since I took my pickerel in and let it drip on her wrapper, they won't let me go into the room any more. It's a burning shame. If she had her way, she'd have me, I know."

"So you get pickerel here, do you?" asks Favernel, glancing across the river, "Does—does your sister care for fishing?" hoping to give the right turn to the conversation.

"No—o," laughs Regy contemptuously, "she squeals when you take 'em off the hook. If you'll come here the last of September Mr. Favernel, I'll show you!" he finishes enthusiastically.

"Good. I'll try to. I never fished but once in this river," says the young man with a peculiar smile, "and then it was for blue-fish," he adds inaudibly.

"Well it's a first rate river" asserts Regy. "Leslie thinks the prettiness in Summer and the skating in the Winter is all there is to it, but I know better."

"Miss Leslie admires it?" asks Favernel, solely for the pleasure of speaking the name.

"I should say so. She's got a retreat, she calls it, where she sits by the hour, watching the water, and reading, and sewing."

The picture rises before Favernel's mental vision, according to the boy's description.

"Perhaps she is there now," he observes, "she is not in the house."

"Shouldn't wonder," assents Regy tersely.

As there is a pause Favernel puts his request into more definite form.

"Tell me where your sister's 'retreat' is and I will go and look for her and let you go on with your reading."

Regy looks doubtful.

"She won't like it if I do. She's awfully choice of her old retreat," he says with sundry resentful memories of his own wrongs.

"Just point out the direction," says Favernel, "and I shall find the spot perhaps by a lucky accident."

"Well it's just down there," says the boy pointing across the lawn. "It's behind some trees and vines and things."

Favernel rises and sets out on his quest, nothing daunted by a parting warning from Regy, delivered in tones of sincerity.

"She'll be awfully sorry to see you coming."

Leslie is in fact in her retreat. From a window she saw the young men driving home from the depot, and immediately fled. Miss Appleton and her father

were on the spot to entertain the guests, and she was not needed.

Seated among the woodbine, her dainty head leaning against her intertwined fingers, and her eyes down cast to the river, she is meditating in quiet, when a shadow falls athwart the grass. Starting, she beholds Douglas Favernel's goodly form and face. He does not look at her, and instinctively she holds her breath hoping that he will pass on. Not for worlds would she meet him here *tete-à-tete*. Her cheeks flush hotly when Mr. Favernel stands still, and gazes at the water. Evidently he also is struck with the beauty of the spot. "Will he never pass on?" she wonders, glad that the noise of the river drowns the beating of her own heart. O, confusion! Mr. Favernel deliberately seats himself in such a way that his profile is toward her. The girl watches him silently. How melancholy he looks. Doubtless he is contemplating the weary days that must elapse ere he can make a respectable escape. Every moment that passes makes it harder for her to speak—more disgraceful for her to remain silent.

Finally a heavy sigh escapes the new-comer. He takes a morocco case from his pocket, opens it with exasperating deliberation, and takes out a stained, rumpled bit of ribbon.

He looks at it tenderly an instant, and raises it to his lips with a fervent movement.

Notwithstanding that this is the most trying, embarrassing moment she could choose for revealing

herself, Leslie feels that she can not play the part of spy another instant.

"Mr. Favernel!" she ejaculates.

That artful person looks, with an admirable air of surprise, up at the speaker, who, like a queen on her throne, gazes down upon him, a fluctuating color in her face.

"Are you there, Miss Forrest," he says, rising, and coming up the hill to stand before her.

"Yes. I—I hoped you would pass by and so I did not speak before."

It is so open a rudeness that Favernel can not repress a smile.

"Isn't that a little hard on your innocent guest?"

"You are not my guest, and I will not wait longer before expressing my sincere sympathy for you, that you were obliged to come here for this visit," says Leslie. "I know my father's invitations. They are unkindly urgent."

"He told you perhaps that my acceptance was reluctant?"

"You surely might infer that," returns Leslie haughtily.

"And surely you might infer why," returns Favernel softly. "You were anything but cordial to me when I was here last. Is it nothing to come here, regarding you as I do, and to be treated daily as you treat me?"

Leslie's eyes droop.

"You don't ask me to be seated, Miss Forrest," says Favernel after a pause.

"You are to do quite as you please here—up to leaving the premises of course," returns Leslie, looking off into space.

"How I wish that were so!" says Douglas devoutly, as he seats himself on the grass. "Pray look at me Miss Forrest," he adds, and as he speaks, he smiles in a way which conveys to Leslie the idea that he is not seriously alarmed by her coldness.

She looks at him immediately. It would be too foolish to refuse.

"You look so—so big lying there," she says capriciously.

"That is so," assents Favernel scanning his own gray-clad person with a serious air. "What are we going to do about it? Don't say that I had better get up, for I am not nearly ready. I must talk to you a little now that I have an opportunity. You have been remarkably careful that I should not have one heretofore. Do you remember the only gift you ever made me, Miss Leslie?"

Leslie does remember vividly, but her face indicates nothing but polite, and evidently forced attention.

"That little bit of ribbon," begins Douglas gravely, "caused a more serious quarrel between Frank and myself than all the money our uncle left."

Leslie raises her eyebrows, and pats the little fluffy rings on her forehead.

"I am so sorry," she says in a conventional tone.

"And I am bitterly sorry," says Favernel slowly and with intense earnestness.

Leslie frowningly examines her finger-nails.

"We were devoted friends," he goes on, looking at her steadily, "until this money trouble divided us, and I was never more happy than on that one day, a month ago, when I supposed we were reconciled. But on the steamer, Frank discovered my love for you." Douglas says it quite as he would speak of any other accepted fact under the sun. "It destroyed the veneering of his cordiality toward me. Why he should grudge me the little hope I had of winning you I can not imagine, since I learn that he is engaged to Miss Appleton; but that he did so was evident. While pretending to brush some lint from my coat, he threw my blue ribbon into the water. I lost my self-control and charged him with having intended the action, and—well, I don't care to rehearse that conversation, it was short and not sweet; but all is over between us forever, and I know now that my brother's part of our temporary reconciliation was never more than skin deep."

Leslie, more and more mollified, is at a loss how to reply to this.

"You ought to feel some responsibility in the matter, Miss Forrest," continues Favernel. "I loved my brother, but I love you a hundred times more. What will you give me from your bounty to make my loss good?"

Leslie can not meet the look in the upturned face. Her eyes light upon the bit of discolored silk in the speaker's hands.

"This is all I have," he continues, following her

glance, "all I have of you, and I worked for it. I think I must have been an hour fishing about among the weeds where I saw it drop."

Leslie is moved by this proof of devotion. "I wonder that you found it," she says.

"O no," says Favernel, simply, as he restores the treasure carefully to his pocket, "I was bound to find it. I never give up anything I have once undertaken."

A sudden warmth flashes over the girl with the conviction that he will never give her up.

"Well?" he says, inquiringly, looking up at her brightly, hopefully. "What can you give me? What, Leslie? Some ghost of a promise for the future, full and free forgiveness for the unfortunate past—no, I take that back. Far be it from me to call that unfortunate, which ushered me into a new world of happiness. Suppose me to have met you in ordinary society even as an extraordinary young lady. Should I in six months have possessed so complete a knowledge of your loveliness as I gained in those few days? Should I have been able to gaze at you as I did then? Listen, Leslie, one further reason why you should bless me. No one but myself knows what I am about to tell you now. I am a poor man."

Miss Forrest looks now at her eager suitor with wide eyes.

"And I must remain so until you raise me from my poverty."

Leslie is amazed at this open acknowledgment of mercenary intentions.

"Not that I want to marry you for your money," and Favernel smiles upon her, "but I want you to marry me for mine. When my uncle's fortune fell to me I realized that it would probably be my ruin. I had all the tendencies in my nature which, when yielded to, lead a man straight downward. I determined to put it beyond my power to yield, by swearing not to use a cent of that money until I was either thirty-five years of age or married. By the time either of those things came to pass, I thought my character would be sufficiently formed for safety. Good idea wasn't it?"

"A noble idea," assents Leslie warmly.

"Charming in theory," continues Favernel, assuming a rueful air, "but it has proved rather severe in practice."

"Why, you have a good business position," says Leslie.

"Tolerable—now; but it hasn't begun to pay me much yet."

Favernel doubles his arm and displays the under part of his coat sleeve which is nearly threadbare. "Look at that," he says meditatively, then crosses his legs and investigates the sole of one of his light Summer shoes. One of the layers is worn through. He looks up with grave eyes. "Leslie, if you are too long in making up your mind, my foot will be on the ground," he says impressively.

The girl smiles and looks away.

"Now, dear," and Favernel comes closer and leans one arm on the rock beside her, "this is the man all tattered and torn."

There is a little pause.

"Do I look like the maiden all forlorn?" Leslie says faintly; but it is a feeble attempt at sauciness, for Douglas has her hand in his, and thus hard pressed, with his adoring eyes upon her, she feels the last vestige of resentment leave her. All the signs are propitious for the determined lover, when Blanche Appleton's face peers curiously over the vines and looks mockingly into Favernel's eyes.

"What a cozy little place," she says innocently. "Leslie, you sly creature, to keep this a secret."

Her voice trembles noticeably, in spite of her effort to be nonchalant, for all her hopes of making a conquest of Douglas Favernel vanish, from the moment she sees him thus. For a moment he keeps his hold on the prisoned hand as he faces the intruder, but the cloud of dislike, almost terror which passes over Leslie's face causes him to release her with a mental anathema on Miss Appleton, none the less hearty because inaudible.

This is not the first time he has seen that expression of repugnance and fear overspread the face he loves, at sight of Blanche, and upon the instant, Douglas resolves that Mr. Forrest's ward shall leave Fairylands. The openness with which she has made advances to himself, and the arrogance of the flirtation she has maintained with Tom Laible who fell an easy prey to her fascinations on the very day of

his arrival, have disgusted and annoyed him beyond expression.

"How impossible," he thinks tenderly, "that a spotless, angelic being like Leslie, should be comfortable in such proximity."

"Here they are, Mr. Laible," calls Blanche over her shoulder, and Tom, approaching, leans his arms on the rock above Leslie's head.

"Well—I like this," he says in an aggrieved tone. "Why have you never brought me here, Miss Forrest?"

Leslie looks up. She does not know whether the interruption is a relief or a disappointment.

"You would have to mount very high in my good graces before I brought you here," she says gaily.

Tom knocks his hat over his eyes with a prolonged groan.

"'Twas ever thus! Why Miss Forrest, where is your discriminating taste? How can a man be preferred to me, who, for instance, wears ready-made clothing. Douglas has always been an odd stick and I am used to him, but when he came home yesterday wearing those garments *ready made*, then it was that my great heart broke!"

"You see," says Favernel *sotto voce* to Leslie, "to what I am reduced."

"More than that," continues Tom in an injured tone, "I'm far more interesting than Favernel in a *tete-à-tete*, only you'll never try me. Favernel hasn't any conversation."

"I didn't bring Mr. Favernel here," says Leslie, with a daring look at her lover, she is so safe now. "He intruded upon me—just as you have done. See," she continues, pushing her dress aside. "It is a seat for two. I have brought Nell here, and my father and Mr. Lamkin know of the place."

"I can see it all!" sighs Tom, with exaggerated sentiment. "The fast flowing river, the whispering trees, the white moonlight sifting through, and Mr. Lamkin and Miss Forrest seated among the embowering vines, while his manly voice speaks softly of possible malaria, and he calls her his jewel!—his own little Graham gem!"

Even Favernel can not help joining in the laughter which follows this rapturous burst.

"Poor Nell!" says Leslie, as she wipes her tears away. "It is a shame for me to leave her so long. I must go to her this minute. She will think I have forgotten her."

"When will Miss Valentine be able to leave her room, do you think?" asks Tom with polite, but not eager inquiry.

"To-morrow, the doctor says," replies Leslie, growing suddenly grave. This week, with its showing of Laible's devotion to Blanche, has been a great disappointment to Nell's champion.

"Please give her my congratulations," says Laible, "and this also if you will," and he produces a small jeweler's box from his pocket. "It is something I promised to get for Miss Valentine some time since."

Leslie's countenance brightens, and she rises with

alacrity. "No, don't come with me, Mr. Favernel," as that gentleman also rises. Then she looks at Blanche and from her to the beloved rocky corner. Her thought is as comprehensible to her lover as though she had spoken. Her wish would be sufficient in any case, but he is quite as unwilling as she, that Blanche Appleton's coquetries should tarnish the purity of his lady-love's bower.

"Miss Appleton," he says, turning to her, "you are at home here, will you not show me Lily Island? I have never been across the bridge."

Yesterday, Blanche would have been elated by this request. To-day she knows it means nothing; still it will annoy Laible to have her consent, and therefore she does so.

Tom mutters something about monopolists, and stalks back to the house beside Leslie.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LESLIE'S CHAMPION.

"Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act
And make her generous thought a fact,
Keeping, with many a light disguise,
The secret of self sacrifice."—J. G. WHITTIER.

"No grievous cost in anything I see
That brings thee bliss—
—So heaven but thy cup fill,
Be empty mine unto eternity."—R. W. GILDER.

IT is a brighter face than usual, that Miss Forrest brings into the sick room this afternoon. Nell is sitting up by the window in her wrapper. Nell rather rejoices in the color of this wrapper which is a dingy gray. She does not wish to be pretty or fine any more.

She looks up inquiringly as Leslie enters. Both have felt the shadow of restraint between them in the past days. Nell, at her window, has been able to keep the run of affairs in this out door weather. No one in the house knows better than she the story of Mr. Laible's infatuation. Once she mentioned to Leslie that Mr. Laible seemed fascinated by Miss Appleton, and Leslie gave a reluctant assent.

"But then I suppose you do not mind it," Nell pursued.

"No; if they do not carry it too far," Leslie replied.

In the last day or two, Nell, from her post of observation, has concluded that they *are* carrying it rather far, and has felt strangely pitiful and sympathetic toward Leslie. Just now, however, she has seen Laible returning to the house in dutiful attendance upon the young hostess, and when Leslie comes into her room, beaming, Nell hardens her heart in proportion to her friend's happiness.

"Mr. Laible sends his congratulations upon your recovery and *this*," holding up the box. "What can it be?"

Nell takes the box without smiling, and opens it without any preliminary wondering as to its contents; but when she draws forth a long slender gold chain from its woolly bed, the color springs high into her face. How long ago that happy evening seems when it was promised her.

"How delicate and pretty!" exclaims Leslie. "How came he to get it, I wonder?"

"It was only his kindness," answers Nell, apologetically. "Would you like me to keep it or not?"

"Why yes, I don't think I would refuse a little gift like that. It hardly seems worth while to make any fuss about it," says Leslie, thoughtfully, letting the slender chain run through her hand. "What is your idea?"

"It shall be just as you say," returns Nell, thinking it probable that Leslie and her husband will give her a good many things, first and last, and that she may as well accustom herself to humble pie early in the game.

Leslie looks at her friend with eyes full of affectionate trouble. She knows and regrets that Nell, from her window, has become cognizant of much of Tom Laible's flippant behaviour, and she thinks she can read Nell's thoughts—thinks she knows why her recovery is attended with so much gravity and heaviness.

Nell's next sentence is hardly a surprise to her.

"Miss Appleton is really going to stay here—always?"

"Apparently. I suppose you are glad of it?"

"Leslie—I hate Miss Appleton!" exclaims Nell, excitedly. "How I ever could have felt otherwise I can not tell. She has not been near me for three days and I am glad of it. We are taught to hate what is bad, and she is bad; considering that she is an engaged woman, her conduct is outrageous!"

Leslie impulsively throws her arms around Nell, and the little dark head is pressed against the lace and embroidery that compose the waist of Miss Forrest's dress. It is the first caress that has passed between them for a week.

How can Nell know that Leslie is thinking—

"I don't believe there ever lived a more candid transparent little soul than Twinkle, or a dearer!"

How can Leslie know that Nell is thinking—

"How bravely Leslie hides her hurt! Who can tell how she may have longed to have some one put into words what I have just said!"

Then the blind kisses the blind, and each feels intensely fond of the other.

A few evenings afterward there is to be a grand fête at Fairylands. It is Leslie's first party, a lawn party at that.

"Let me see," says Tom, meditatively, "it was at a lawn party that you first met Miss Forrest, wasn't it, Favernel?" but he is promptly frowned down.

Miss Cobb is full of business.

Were she allowed her own way, no "army of blacks," as she dubs the caterer's retinue, should have control of the supper; but she has been persuaded to defer to public opinion, and the current of her energy is turned into the minor arrangements.

"All I ask of you girls," she says, with emphasis, "is to be dressed early," and such is her fussiness on this point that even Blanche is in the drawing room an hour before the first guest can possibly arrive.

Mr. Forrest, coming into the room, drawing on his gloves, decides as he views the young ladies, that they and the house are all that can be desired to satisfy the proper pride of a country gentleman. The house is beautifully dressed with flowers, and brilliantly lighted from top to bottom. As the host enters the room, his eye falls first upon Blanche, who stands before a long, broad mirror, viewing her reflection from all sides. Her dress is of pale pink silk, the corsage cut low and square both in the front and back, and by way of sleeves, little wreaths of pendant rose-buds with flexible stems, pass over her shoulders.

Regy also enters the room while she is taking her calm, critical survey, her face showing no sign that

the result gives her pleasure. "Whew, Blanche," he says "you look like a great strawberry ice."

"Children," says Blanche, looking over her much trimmed train, "should be seen and not heard."

"Blanche, my dear, you do us credit," asserts her guardian warmly. "When you have finished admiring yourself, turn around and give us an opportunity."

"Thank you sir, I will. You must excuse me by remembering that mine is the only bed-room in the house, which does not boast the luxury of a pier glass."

So having given her little sting, and caused Mr. Forrest to feel accused by his own conscience of not looking out sufficiently for the comfort of a helpless orphan, the young woman subsides into an arm chair, and commences playing with the exquisite fan, a combination of pearl and feathers, which is a present from this same cruel guardian, as well as the dress she wears. Excitement has warmed Miss Valentine into extraordinary good looks this evening. Leslie has secretly provided her with a dress for the occasion, and, but that Nell's heart has grown tender toward Leslie, she would rather wear the gray Summer silk, or not appear at all, than accept this favor at her hands; but believing, as she does, that Leslie is even more unhappy than herself, insomuch as her pride as well as her love is injured, and knowing the pleasure the ordering of the dress has given her, she accepts delightedly; the consequence is that to-night she feels perhaps for the first time in her life, what

it is to be certain that one is pretty and attractive. Only a woman knows how well another woman can look in mull and a mile of valenciennes lace, combined in the latest style, and looped and trimmed with rosebuds in graceful sprays.

Nell looks lovely, and is aware of it with the surprised pleasure touched with consciousness, which one sees sometimes in girls who have hitherto accepted the fact of their plainness as unalterable. Her cheeks are flushed, and she meets Mr. Forrest's questioning look with a smile.

"Yes, the fairy god-mother has touched me," she says. "I shall shiver with fear when I hear twelve strike," and she lays her hand lovingly on Leslie's shoulder.

Leslie, the *debutante*, the bright particular star of the occasion in people's minds, sits in an easy chair; her little foot in its silk stocking, and satin slipper rests on a hassock. Never in her life has Leslie looked so bewitching. She is quiet rather than gay but she is very happy. It has a subduing effect upon her, this love of Favernel's which she has come to believe in, and to value, and—to return. Not one word save of common politeness has she given him since his pleading, two days ago. Not again has he found opportunity to speak to her alone. She is all unready to tell him what she, herself, is only beginning to be conscious of.

Her father turns his critical eyes upon her and she returns his gaze smilingly, aware that from the top-

most wave of her golden hair, to the train of her cloud-like dress, she will bear criticism.

Mr. Forrest takes a white satin case from its hiding place behind a large vase.

"You are fine, dear, but too colorless. Will you allow your father to light you up a little?" he asks, opening the case and taking therefrom, a necklace of matched rubies fit for a queen, and before Leslie can exclaim, he has clasped it around her neck.

The jewels gleam against their pure background, and tears spring to Leslie's eyes.

"Did you really think your father would forget that this is his only daughter's birthday?" asks Mr. Forrest, taking her hands and raising her to her feet, as he kisses her forehead.

"This Leslie's birthday!" exclaims Regy, who is the only one of the little group to whom that fact is of more importance than the gorgeous necklace.

Blanche and Nell draw near expressing their admiration characteristically, the former saying nothing, but handling the gems, and devouring them with her eyes, while Nell fairly jumps up and down.

"O Mr. Forrest," she exclaims, "that was an inspiration! She was a vision before, but a vision that made one chilly. Those rubies warm her right up. O, you beautiful, beautiful thing."

As Miss Valentine brings out these adjectives with great fervor, the two swallow-tailed visitors come in upon the tableau made by Leslie, her hand still in her father's and her uplifted eyes sparkling with tears. A faint color tinges her cheeks, and Faver-

nel's heart bounds at sight of her exceeding loveliness.

"You have come upon a grand presentation scene," says Blanche. "Leslie has stolen a march upon all but her father. This is her birthday."

"Why so 'tis. I remember Mr. Forrest spoke of it to me yesterday," says Laible, who, as soon as the secret was revealed to him, put it beyond danger by forgetting all about it.

"Allow me, Miss Forrest, to present the customary compliments of the day, and to congratulate you upon your general gorgeousness. I believe that is allowable in addressing a *debutante*," and having performed his agreeable duty, Laible turns toward his loadstone; but on his way to her is obliged to pass Miss Valentine, and, blind as he is latterly, even he can not fail to notice her unusual appearance, and altering his intention, he seats himself upon a hassock beside her.

Nell assumes no air of virtuous reproach; she will not even allow herself to show the least sign of her real displeasure. She tries to behave in keeping with her costume and surroundings, and succeeds. She is arch, she is brilliant, she is saucy. Through it all her manner is flattering, and Laible, highly entertained, can not regret the absence of the majesty and insolence whose servant he has been for so many days.

The "strawberry ice" raises her eyebrows freezingly as she glances in the direction of the pair,

when their *tete-à-tete* has already lasted several minutes and shows no signs of flagging.

"Watch Miss Appleton," says Nell, "I can feel her patronage 'way from here. I presume she tolerates leaving you with me awhile on the doctrine that 'a little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men,' and will set off to advantage the 'feast of reason and the flow of soul' with which she regales you."

"Soul!" mutters Tom, contemptuously.

"You didn't see Miss Forrest when her father gave her that chain, did you?" asks Nell suddenly.

"No."

"You never saw anything sweeter, it really makes me feel tearful to recall it," continues the girl. "Leslie is so quiet and subdued these days, and so evidently thought that her birthday would pass unnoticed—"

Suddenly it flashes upon the speaker *why* her beloved friend is quiet and subdued; and indignation rises within her.

"It was stupid in me to forget what her father told me; I ought to have brought out a basket of flowers or some other trifle," adds Laible's deliberate voice.

"I think myself it would have been well," replies Nell with cutting sarcasm. "Now if Miss Appleton's birthday had been in question, there would have been no trouble about remembering."

Laible looks up in surprise at the bright, flushed face. He is far from falling easily into the egotism

of believing women to be unduly interested in himself, but so plainly has Nell's preference been displayed on various occasions during their acquaintance, that no ordinary man could fail to observe it; and although in the last ten days she has shared the common fate in the total eclipse produced by Blanche, now he sees an expression in her face that can only mean one thing, namely, that his pre-occupation has affected her seriously, and the discovery is incense to his vanity.

The truth is, Nell has forgotten, or sunk her own hopes in unselfish concern for her friend's happiness; and summoning her courage, she continues :

"I am aware that I am about to do a daring, perhaps an impertinent thing, Mr. Laible; I am going to say something which most girls would shrink from saying."

Here she pauses, trembling until her laces vibrate, while Laible takes refuge in twisting his moustache, and studying the carpet. What can it be that the pretty little creature is nerving herself to say? Is it possible that she really cares for him enough to take him to task for his neglect of her? It is a conceited thought, worthy the average man, but it receives its punishment.

Nell takes a long quick breath, and says petulantly :

"Why, I can't go on unless you tell me I must!"

"I see," murmurs Tom, "I am to receive the continuation of that lecture begun by Umbagog. Go on, I am even more willing than I was then to

be taken to task by you, and promise faithfully to take your words to heart."

This last with a look which causes Nell for one little moment to forget Leslie's cause in her own.

She puts down the sensation of pleasure with decision, looking over at Leslie to gather courage from the white, still figure.

"You are a good-hearted man, aren't you?" she asks suddenly. "Don't people always refer to you as a good-hearted man?"

"I believe they do."

"Very well, I *detest* good-hearted men!" exclaims Nell triumphantly.

Laible stares at her in ludicrous amazement. Is this the shy admission he has awaited with such interest?

"Good-hearted people are the sort that are always meaning well, and doing wrong," continues Miss Valentine with suppressed excitement. "I've no patience with them. You don't look or seem like a villain, but you are, one of the most aggravated and aggravating type. A good-hearted villain."

Laible smiles and looks up into the sparkling eyes bent courageously upon him.

"I hope you will excuse the expression," he says, "but this is the first time I was ever regularly rowed by a young lady. No doubt I deserve it in a general way, but just to oblige, won't you particularize?"

"I shall believe you something worse than a good-hearted villain, if you pretend innocence. To accept

this hospitality and then behave as you have done is —*dishonorable*."

"Miss Valentine," says Tom, in quiet warning.

The quick tears spring to Nell's eyes.

"Hate me all the rest of your life, but I am started and you must listen to me. Think of your having won the love of a woman, beautiful as an angel and lovely as a saint, and neglecting this treasure, passing her by for a haughty, selfish, pillar of ice!"

Here Nell pauses, and swallows several times. She is in danger of crying, and very soon she will be called upon to meet a hundred strangers.

"Leslie is not even aware that I know of your relations to one another, we never speak of you," she continues quickly, "but surely you are dreaming, and can only need some friend to speak plainly and bring you to your senses."

Indeed Laible does look as if he would like that office performed for him. He is quite certain he must be dreaming. He has settled to this conversation all complacency, within and without, and a comical change comes over his features as he realizes that this dainty bit of a "woman in white" has no flattering reproaches to make on her own account, only a very unromantic downright scolding to administer, and her last tirade fairly takes his breath away.

Leslie! His relations with Leslie!

Here Miss Appleton approaches.

"Come, little Valentine," she says, "Leslie says it is time for us to group ourselves gracefully."

"Yes, in a moment," replies Nell without turning

her head, and Blanche, seeing that she is for the time *de trop* sails away again.

"*Little Valentine!* Isn't that regularly insulting?" asks the girl. "Did you notice, Mr. Laible, how delightfully tall from a back view I look in this dress?" she adds eagerly.

"I noticed that there was something delightful about it," replies Tom, scanning her admiringly.

"Just let me show you," and Nell rises and promenades up and down before him. "Only notice me when my back is turned; in front, the dress is so fashionably short, that I look more insignificant than ever."

"Her feet beneath her petticoat like little mice peeped in and out," quotes Laible.

"Yes, white mice," assents the girl, looking down at the tiny slashed slippers, with their inordinately high French heels.

Suddenly she stops before him, and holds out her hand.

"How perfectly good tempered you are," she says, soberly, "or perhaps it is only that you are perfectly well-bred. Do you think I have been happy enough to bring you to your senses?"

Tom rises, takes the hand reverently and draws it within his arm, then they move slowly across the room toward Leslie, standing by the mirror with Blanche; and as they go Laible looks down, curiously, at his companion.

"I'm a shallow sort of fellow, Miss Valentine," he says.

"So am I," responds Nell, with sympathetic earnestness.

"But I really believe you have brought me to my senses."

Nell listens to the low tone and tries to be happy for Leslie.

"I believe that for weeks I have lived in the house with the woman who holds my happiness in her little hands and have not realized it."

Nell does not speak, but she begins to think she deserves a place in the ranks with Fox's martyrs.

"And Miss Appleton?" she questions at length.

"I have determined to give Miss Appleton a holiday from my society. Why do you ignore my poor little gift, Miss Valentine?"

Nell colors nervously.

"Don't you like a white cord better with this dress?" she asks. "There are the first of the guests, I must take my place."

Leslie smiles graciously upon the pair.

"I do believe Mr. Laible has discovered that Nell is pretty," she thinks, and groans in spirit over the frivolity that must wait for the fine feathers before it can appreciate how fine a bird is within.

Leslie is partly right and partly wrong. It is true that Laible was first attracted by Nell's unusual appearance, but it is not only that her delicate, refined costume pleases his taste, while he objects to Blanche's extreme *décolleté*, for in truth he has begun to weary of the latter's imperiousness. It is restful to return to Nell, scolding and all. He is

surprised to find how much he enjoys her little mannerisms, and how familiar and pleasant they seem.

As he walks away he ponders over Nell's words, and wonders how, by any possibility, she can have gained the idea that Miss Forrest and himself are more to one another than friends. There is certainly no one of whom he can inquire about the matter save Miss Valentine herself, and that the artful young man decides not to do at present. It has suddenly struck him that Nell's false belief can be made to serve his purpose for this evening at least.

Douglas Favernel, tall and impressive, crosses the room and pauses beside Miss Forrest. She gives him a welcoming glance. She dares to do so here amid a room full.

"You look like a bride to-night," he says, with his usual directness.

"With these red stones? O no," replies Leslie, touching her necklace.

"Why not? I think you do," maintains Douglas stoutly, "and I"—looking his immaculate costume over, "am I not fit to be a bridegroom?"

Leslie thinks that he is—decidedly fit.

"I shall pretend to myself that we are,—make believe that we are, as the children say," he continues. "This is much the way that we should receive together, isn't it?"

"I hope not," returns Leslie; "there is a lady behind you now, trying in vain to pay her respects to me, while you are blocking the way."

Favernel starts aside, and watches Leslie's grace-

ful greeting of the guests. When the pair have passed on, he continues persistently.

"When are you going to take pity on my poverty, Miss Leslie?"

Leslie surveys him from his chin downward, with smiling disdain. "Don't come to me with any pitiful stories to-night," she says.

"Perhaps you never heard of such a thing as renting dress suits," he returns, with dark significance.

The girl laughs outright. "If that is a fortuitous fit you do not need to have clothes made for you any more."

"Who's got a fit?" asks Mr. Lamkin, suddenly appearing on her other hand, looking more than usually distressed.

"Go away, both of you," says Leslie. "I have my reputation as a hostess to make to-night."

Thus dismissed, the young men move off, Mr. Lamkin looking wizen beside Favernel, "quite," thinks Leslie "as if one were looking at him through the wrong end of an opera-glass."

The strains of waltz music are sounding, without, where, on the smoothly waxed platform the dancers are enjoying the cool air. Hundreds of Chinese lanterns swing from trees and bridges, and the moon beams calmly over all.

Tom Laible stands just without the platform, pulling his moustache in great vexation of spirit. Only one waltz has he been able to secure with Nell, who avoids him for her own peace of mind; and as he

finds her dancing to be something phenomenally fine, his trial is heavy to bear. He watches her from his dim corner, and plans his revenge.

The evening is half gone, but as guests continue to arrive, Leslie is still at her post. Her father and Douglas Favernel are standing near her, the latter sufficiently happy and entertained merely to be within sight of her.

“I should miss that daughter out of my house,” Mr. Forrest says, regarding her with affectionate eyes.

“I am sure you would, sir,” assents Favernel heartily.

“I think when she is married, I shall be selfish enough to insist upon her remaining here.”

Something definite in his host's tone causes a terrible fear to leap through the young man's heart like a knife.

“When she is—is your daughter going to be—” Mr. Forrest turns and looks sharply into his companion's face.

“Yes; and you, with your intimate relations, you have not been told? Well, young people are close-mouthed in these days.”

Favernel compels himself to stand still a full minute, until the dizziness which suddenly seizes him has fled, and until Mr. Forrest's voice ceases to seem so far away and so confused. When he next understands what his host is saying, Tom Laible is the subject of remark..

“Yes, Laible will work hard to give your clients

satisfaction, and whenever opportunity occurs, will surely prove his gratitude to you for your kindness." Douglas replies monotonously, then excusing himself on the plea of the warmth of the room, he moves away. He longs to leave the house, to escape from these surroundings forever, but there is something that he must do first. Even now Leslie's happiness is his uppermost thought.

He goes slowly out doors and across the lawn, looking carefully at each lady who passes him in the moonlight.

Arrived at the dancing floor, he finds Tom Laible, who still stands gloomily gnawing his moustache, and watching Nell's entrancing gyrations.

Favernel touches his absorbed friend.

"Where is Miss Appleton?" he asks.

"Don't know," is the short rejoinder.

"Since when?"

Tom looks up, wondering at the strange tone.

"Douglas, old fellow, I want you to understand that until yesterday I did not dream that Miss Appleton was engaged to your brother."

"I wish it were only a dream," says Favernel.

"Well, he doesn't. She had the—the poor taste to show me one of his letters. I read it before I discovered the truth, and you needn't be uneasy, he is absolutely satisfied with her. He is here. Have you seen him? By Jove, you're enough to give people brain fever to-night with your twin claw-hammers."

"Well, I must find my future sister," says Favernel abruptly, turning away.

It is the reserved taciturn Favernel of old that speaks, and not the genial being Tom has known of late, and he feels the change.

"Wait a minute Douglas, I remember now, I did see her and—and your brother walking over that way," he says.

Favernel nods and walks off in the direction indicated. An intuition leads him to Leslie's rocky retreat. With mingled resentment and pain, he hears low voices as he approaches, and soon, by the light of the lanterns, he sees his brother and Blanche ensconced in the sacred spot; for sacred it still is to him. Leslie has not treated him well, but he excuses her to his own honest heart.

Blanche starts as she recognizes him, yet why, she wonders, should she feel guilty merely because she is occupying one particular spot on her guardian's estate? Frank rises angrily to his feet.

"Why do you come here?" he asks rudely.

The two men stand regarding one another, so wonderfully similar in their physical beauty, that Blanche is struck afresh by the resemblance. She watches them for a moment, spell-bound, frightened, then:

"Frank, keep your temper," she says authoritatively. "Did you want me, Mr. Favernel?"

"I did, and Frank, if he chooses, may hear what I have to say to you."

"Of course I choose. You are the last man I would leave with my promised wife."

"Miss Appleton," says Douglas, henceforth ignoring his brother's presence, "I have a sum of money which you as my brother's wife should enjoy. It is a part of what my uncle left. I propose to give it to you if you will accept it."

The sparkle in Blanche's pale eyes is visible. She silences Frank as he begins to speak.

"But I shall give it to you on a slight condition, or if you like it better, I will say that I wish to ask a favor of you."

"Ask me anything you like!" exclaims Blanche.

"It is simply that you leave Fairylands."

"Leave Fairylands!"

"Call it a whim of mine if you like. Yes, I wish you would leave Fairylands, and soon—to-morrow."

"But I have invited guests for to-morrow, I give a picnic," says Blanche, bewildered.

"Then let it be the next day at farthest. That is the favor I ask, Miss Appleton," adds Douglas, dropping his tone of authority. "If you grant it—if you leave this place the day after to-morrow and do not return to it, I shall have the pleasure of placing this sum to your credit." Here Favernel takes a scrap of paper from his pocket.

Blanche almost snatches it from his hand.

Frank Favernel, to show his indifference to the whole proceeding, has just lighted a cigar. Blanche takes it from his hand, places it between her lips, and blows the lighted end into a glow by which she

reads the five figures on the paper. With a joyful cry she looks up.

"Mr. Favernel, you can hardly name anything that I would refuse to do for that sum. Your wishes shall be carried out to the letter. Now confess," with an arch look, "you grudge my occupying Miss Forrest's place here."

Douglas surveys her, standing in her extreme *décolleté*, her head on one side, and the cigar held between two fingers, and contrasts her with his—not his darling any more!

"See my docility," continues Blanche. "I will leave the place at once. It isn't very comfortable, between you and me, so don't thank me too much. Come, Frank."

Then Douglas turns and goes back to the house. As he enters the hall he catches a glimpse of the bright head, every hair of which is a hundred times dearer to him than gold. Then, for the first time, he quickens his movements, and hurries up-stairs three steps at a time.

CHAPTER XIX.

LILY ISLAND.

“‘So now we are rich are we not?’ she said
And faltered, all trembling with love confessed ;
And I, with knowing I was so dear,
Trembled, but gathered my rose to my breast ;
And Love was answered, and Life was clear.”
—MRS. Z. B. GUSTAFSON.

THE supper room is opened, and the guests are coming and going through the house. Blanche is at the piano, surrounded by a little circle of music-lovers. How she sings to-night ! The song she has chosen is a new setting of old familiar words, and they cause Leslie, passing through the room, to pause and listen with a half smile on her lips.

“I’d be so loving, so faithful, Douglas,
Tender and true.”

Tom Laible approaches her as she moves into the hall.

“What a voice !” he says. “I used to believe that when she was singing, was the only time Miss Appleton’s true character showed itself.”

“What do you believe now ?” asks Leslie, innocently.

“Least said soonest mended,” returns Tom a little shamefacedly. “Miss Forrest,” he continues, “I wish to enlist your sympathy and assistance.”

“Mine ?”

"On Miss Valentine's account. She has neglected me shamefully all the evening."

Neglected him shamefully! Leslie wonders at the egotism and selfishness of mankind. A little gleam of mischief lights her eyes. "What wonder? She sees you every day. Now these young gentlemen, here, to-night, are new and interesting."

"That may be; but I don't propose to be eluded and ignored as I have been hitherto."

"I don't see any remedy for your sufferings."

"But I do. Will you say to Miss Valentine just what I teach you?"

"Really I don't know. Teach me first, and I'll judge."

"You are delightful, Miss Forrest. This is a new kind of '*Dites-lui*' isn't it? All you need say is, Nell, my darling—"

"But I never call Nell, 'darling,'" interrupts Leslie, laughing in spite of herself, "and you mustn't either."

"Very well then. Nell, my love, I am so occupied I really can not look after Mr. Laible as I would like, just take a little care of him for me; remember, he knows no one here."

"I shall not say anything of the sort. I am not going to interfere with Nell's pleasure."

"O, pity the sorrows of a poor young man! Do, Miss Forrest, you said you would. I tell you there is a mystic power in those words, of which you do not dream."

"Well, perhaps," promises Leslie, vaguely.

"As I lay my heart on your dead heart, Douglas,
Tender and true,"

come the last words of Blanche's song, and her voice dies away amidst murmurs of delight. Mr. Lamkin, straying into the hall, sees Leslie.

"Have you been to the supper-room, Miss Forrest?" he inquires.

"She is just about to go with me," interposes Tom.

"Were you going, Mr. Lamkin?" asks the girl.

"Yes, I thought if you would like"—hesitates Mr. Lamkin.

"Then I will go with you," says Leslie, taking his arm.

"O, what an unhealthy evening for self-esteem!" exclaims Laible, with a gloomy frown.

"I'll speak to her," nods Leslie comfortingly, then she moves away, with Mr. Lamkin, to the well-filled supper-room.

Among the crowd is Nell, eating an ice and talking with animation to her escort, who laughs incessantly at her remarks.

Leslie approaches her, and speaks her little piece, and Nell turns a grave, reproachful look upon her, under which Leslie blushes, conscious of her bit of acting, then passes on, leaving the mystic power, which Laible mentioned, to perform its part.

"And what are you going to have, Mr. Lamkin?" asks Leslie, as Eustace supplies her with salad. The young gentleman groans.

"I know what I *should* have if I indulged in any of that unholy stuff," he says with a grim smile.

"Then have you accompanied me here only to watch me while I eat?" asks Leslie, thinking of the skeleton at the feast.

"No, not entirely. I received a letter from my mother to-day."

"Yes? How is Mrs. Lamkin? I believe I don't care for salad after all. Take my plate please, and let me have an ice. Thank you. How is your mother?"

"O, very well," groans Mr. Lamkin.

"That's good I'm sure. What have you on your mind? You seem uncomfortable," says Leslie, calmly.

"Uncomfortable! That is a mild name for it. I wish she'd let me alone," snaps Mr. Lamkin, smoothing his side whiskers, then, as Leslie does not speak, "What do you suppose she wants me to do? *Get married.*"

Leslie smiles at the woeful tone. "And you are disinclined?"

"Well, I don't know, not exactly, if it came about easily. Do let me stand where I can't see that lady eat fruit cake. I'd rather see her handle cold steel! You see, Miss Forrest, my mother likes you very much, and so do I, you're so quiet and calm, never jump around like Nell, and fluster a fellow."

Leslie listens to this delicate flattery with a puzzled expression.

"Your father has been very kind to me, and you—well you're a perfect lady, you are pleasant to everyone. You both seem to like me, and, as I said, you're a quiet, comfortable person to live with, and

the fact is, here's my heart and hand, only there's one thing I must stipulate for," motioning Leslie back as though to repress any symptoms of over eagerness. "I must insist on a quiet wedding; no splurge, or guests, or anything exciting or worrying about it; we must just be quietly married, and go on as before."

He pauses, out of breath, and meets Leslie's wondering, smiling gaze bent upon him. So she might look at a monkey, of peculiar and unusual habits, in the cage among its fellows.

"Did you really think I would marry you?" she asks slowly.

"Why, I didn't know. Do make up your mind quickly," he says fretfully; "you ought to feel how my heart is beating. My mother is so inconsiderate."

"Make yourself easy, Mr. Lamkin," replies Leslie, with her silvery laugh, this incredible experience appealing irresistibly to her sense of the ludicrous, "you are safe; I will not marry you."

"Not even if I should work myself up as most fellows do, go down on my knees and all that?" asks Mr. Lamkin, with a tardy sense of duty.

"No more than I would our watch-dog," returns Leslie, pleasantly.

"And you don't want time to think or—or anything?"

"Not a moment," says the girl with a marvellous play of dimples.

"Then," with a joyful countenance, "I am refused?"

Leslie nods.

"Thank you—I mean, that is, some other fellow 'll get you, more worthy, and—I knew I didn't deserve it, and—it's fearfully warm in here," stutters Mr. Lamkin, mopping his noble brow, "would you mind finishing supper alone, and letting me go off and get cool,—slowly of course; there is nothing so dangerous as cooling off suddenly."

"Yes, I would mind it," responds Leslie promptly; "stay where you are, please."

Mr. Laible wanders into the room alone. He passes close by Nell, apparently without seeing her, and stops in front of Leslie and her escort, and as he appears to have come to stay, Miss Forrest takes pity on the Lamkin.

"Go if you like, now," she says, nodding pleasantly, and he goes.

"Time for his little nip of pain-killer, probably," suggests Tom.

Leslie laughs. "Sir, I am not supposed to know what a 'little nip' is," she says. "Poor Mr. Lamkin, I don't believe he has danced once to-night. He is afraid of taking cold."

"I pity his partner, if he should dance," says Tom gravely, "he would probably shake her before taking her, by an inseparable connection of ideas."

"Be still. You are making me disgrace myself," begs Leslie, longing to tell this appreciative auditor of the honor which has just been offered her.

Her father, hurrying into the room, and making his way toward her with less mercy on delicate garments than is his usual courteous habit, prevents her from yielding to the temptation.

"What has happened, dear?" she asks anxiously, noting the expression of his face.

"Favernel's gone," returns Mr. Forrest, in a tone of great annoyance.

"Gone!" echo Leslie and Laible, together.

"Yes; the first warning I had was seeing him hurry down stairs in his business suit, with his valise in his hand."

"His valise? Then he is not coming back," says Leslie, growing very pale.

"Don't I tell you," retorts her father, thoroughly out of temper, "he has gone—gone away. A telegram or something; he left his good-byes—he didn't want to disturb you, he said, and he will write to Mr. Laible."

"Queer fellow," comments Tom, who has just discovered that Twinkle is calling him to her with a motion of her head.

"What is more, it has begun to rain. You will have to do the rest of your dancing in the house."

"I will come and see about it," replies Leslie taking her father's arm, and bowing a grave farewell to Laible, who instantly hurries to Nell.

She looks at him shyly from beneath her pretty eyelashes.

"I have just discovered that my next waltz is dis-

engaged," she says softly. "Will—can you find me a partner?"

Laible takes her card which, in spite of her unceasing exercise of the evening, he finds to be blank—a mortifying discovery for him, considering the way he has been put off until now.

"Never mind, young lady," he thinks, "I have you now securely, thanks to my own *finesse*," and taking his pencil, he inscribes his initials in capitals which reach from top to bottom of the card, and returns it to her with a bow.

Leslie mechanically gives her orders for the clearing of the rooms, while her heart is aching with disappointment. She reviews her own conduct toward Favernel, and wonders what there has been in it to cause him to leave her thus, without a word. Yet, and it proves, if proof is needed, that she loves him truly, it does not occur to her to blame him. He has had good reason for this move. Alas, Leslie feels that he has at last found himself obliged to give up an undertaking.

Twinkle comes in, so pretty and bright as she leans on Laible's arm, Leslie forgets, for one instant, everything but gratitude for her; and Nell is happy, recklessly happy; aware that Mr. Laible is flirting desperately with her, aware also that to-morrow he will be Leslie's, but this night is *hers*. Leslie, wisely or not, has given it to her, and she will remember it forever.

"How pale and tired Leslie looks," she says to her

partner, as they move away in a waltz over the in-laid floor.

He only replies with some low-spoken compliment.

Leslie is conscious of Nell's searching look, and that other curious glances are being leveled at her.

She bites her lips. She can feel that they are colorless. A gentleman asks her to dance.

"I think I can not. The room is so full. The rain has spoiled all my arrangements," she says, mechanically.

She does not know how she gets through it all. Many months in her young life have seemed shorter than this evening, but it does come to an end, the guests depart in a drizzling rain, and the strain is removed. Leslie's face settles into a white, weary look.

"Well, it has been a good time in spite of the rain," says Mr. Forrest with a good natured glance at Nell's bright face.

"The best time I ever had! One of the things to store up in the memory and bring out when one has the blues," replies that young woman, waltzing around as gaily as though she had been resting all the evening.

Mr. Laible has gone to the billiard room to smoke. Miss Cobb moves about, putting chairs in their places. She would give years of her life to banish that white, worn look from her darling's face, and Miss Valentine is amazed to meet the look of angry

reproach in the housekeeper's eyes. She reads the cause of it rightly, but her conscience is clear, she has only obeyed orders.

"My little girl must sleep till noon to-morrow," says Mr. Forrest, patting Leslie's cheek.

"She must be careful not to sleep after noon," adds Blanche, "we are to have a picnic at Lily Island to-morrow," and as she slowly ascends the stairs she sings with fervor her song of the evening:

"Could ye come back to me, Douglas, Douglas,
In the old likeness that I knew,
I'd be so loving, so faithful, Douglas,
Tender and true."

It is nearly noon the next day when Miss Valentine knocks at her friend's door. A half dozen times she has stolen near enough to listen, and hearing no sound has tiptoed away again; but the seventh time she is rewarded. Leslie is certainly moving about, so she knocks and enters. As she closes the door behind her, the dark old clock tells the hour of noon. Who knows what centuries ago the quaint old tune was written, which the deep-voiced chime, hoarse with age, yet so impressively musical, is sounding? Nell seats herself quietly on the lounge to listen, just smiling a good morning to her friend. Leslie, white as a lily, stands before her dressing case, putting the finishing touches to her toilet. The dark shadows beneath her eyes contradict the pleasant smile with which she greets Nell.

When the last note dies away the latter springs up briskly and pulls the bell cord.

"What's that for?" asks Leslie.

"I told Miss Cobb, I'd ring for your breakfast to be brought up as soon as you were ready."

"If you are going to join forces with cousin Dorothy in spoiling me, I'm much afraid you'll succeed."

"Well, I hope we shall. Miss Cobb said that as a usual thing she wouldn't let me have anything to do with taking care of you; but while you looked so pale and kept secrets from her, she couldn't bear to be with you."

While Nell talks, she bustles about and clears a little table ready for the breakfast. Leslie's night has been better than hers. Poor Nell! She has wrestled and prayed in the night watches, and she has made up her mind. It has been hard, for wonderful, presumptuous as it seems, she feels sure that it rests only with herself to transform Laible into her lover instead of Leslie's. It does not occur to her that one who can love Leslie one week, Miss Appleton another, and herself another, is not so lofty a character as to be excessively lovable and desirable. She can only consider it the one good thing of her life that her week ever comes; and in spite of it all—in spite of the fact that the treasure is almost within her grasp—she believes that if she behaves rightly he will return to Leslie now, and be true to her. Nell has nerved herself to give him up, once and for ever; not with tears and pallor, but in

a healthy wholesome way, because it is honorable and right, and because she loves Leslie; and she comforts herself with the remembrance of one who has said, "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Leslie looks at Nell in surprise. "Secrets from cousin Dorothy;" she repeats.

"Yes, but it will not be for long," says Nell, coming close and laying her cheek against Leslie's shoulder.

"You talk in enigmas, Twinkle," replies the other, shaking her head.

"Do I? Well tell me. Did I do anything to displease you last night?"

"No, dear. You behaved beautifully, and took care of Mr. Laible just as I asked you to."

Nell gives a sigh of relief. "That's right, and here's your breakfast," as Augustus knocks.

"Miss Cobb is packing the baskets for Lily Island," she continues, taking the tray and placing it on the table. "Now sit down here, and drink all that coffee, and eat every one of the waffles."

Leslie smiles. "What is this about Lily Island? It's news to me."

"It is a sort of picnic that Blanche has gotten up. We are to have tea in the grove and row on the river and all that sort of thing. You know it is full moon to-night and the day promises beautifully.

"So did yesterday," says Leslie with an odd smile, "O, my damp *fête champêtre*!" I am not a success

as a giver of parties. I hope the elements will treat Miss Appleton more kindly."

"So do I," assents Nell. "How much you must dislike her!" she exclaims abruptly.

"Blanche? Yes: but she is a necessary evil, which can't be cured and must be endured."

"Mr. Laible doesn't care *that* for her," says Nell, snapping her fingers.

Leslie sips her coffee and looks across the little table at Nell. Both girls blush furiously. Nell, under Leslie's scrutiny, and Leslie in sympathy with Nell. Leslie pushes her chair back.

"You haven't eaten a thing," cries Nell.

"No matter. Late suppers do not agree with me, perhaps. I wish I could escape that picnic this afternoon, Nell."

This idea does not suit Miss Valentine at all. She means that this day shall restore her friend to that state of beatitude befitting Tom Laible's future bride.

"I think you must go, Leslie," she says. "Miss Appleton will be very much offended by your absence."

"I really don't care about that," is the quiet answer.

"Well then, your absence will spoil everything for me," says Nell firmly.

Leslie looks up in surprise. It is a new thing for Nell to interpose her own pleasure as a matter of importance.

"O, very well, I will be there. At what time do we start?"

"Four o'clock."

"Then I will try to get a little sleep first."

Nell feels that she is dismissed. Ah, if Leslie only knew how truly she is about to prove herself her friend, she would not have thoughts away from her. With a sad look of reproach she is about to leave the room when Leslie springs up and suddenly takes both her hands.

"Twinkle, do not think hardly of me, I have been hurt. I can not tell you more. Forgive me if I take a few more hours to regain my balance. Give me till four o'clock and I will be myself again."

Nell smiles. "Neither must you think hardly of me" she says gently; "you will forgive me sometime for urging you to go this afternoon. Use these hours in hoping that wrongs are about to be righted. Take courage and remember that it is always darkest before day;" and with this peroration Nell kisses her friend, and leaves her.

Blanche's guests assemble at the appointed hour. Eight couples have been invited to a novel kind of kettle-drum on the island. It is the first of September, and the weather is especially auspicious. The young ladies and gentlemen arrive in carriages, and sit in the library, talking and laughing, as they await the signal for departure.

Mr. Forrest moves about among them, making the more effort to be courteous and agreeable, that the little party is his ward's venture and not his

daughter's ; but everything is an effort to the great lawyer to-day. He misses Douglas Favernel more than he would own, and once away from the claims of business, he feels strange and aimless to the verge of irritability. He knits his brows in an effort to remember with whom he talked, and in what consisted his enjoyment of home life before Douglas came reluctantly to visit at Fairylands ; and draws a long sigh of relief when the caravan starts.

Blanche is in brilliant spirits to-day, and, as she moves out the door, turns to Laible.

"You may carry my wrap," she says imperiously.

To her amazement her ex-slave does not come at her bidding.

"I must resign the honor to some one else," he says, and passes on, with Leslie.

One moment Miss Appleton stares after their retreating figures, then is fain to lay the honor, and the wrap, upon Mr. Lamkin, who supports the burden as well as maybe, and the couples move on. Another pair of eyes follow Leslie and Laible as they saunter down the hill. Nell is with one of her new friends of the night before. She has resisted all temptations in the way of crisp muslins, and the white and cardinal wrap, and has donned her mountain suit, the black kilt dress, and the black hat and roses. It looks a little shabby, but Nell tells herself severely it is all the better on that account.

Leslie and Tom are the first to reach the landing.

"Have you seen your friend to-day, or learned

anything of his sudden departure?" she asks, as they wait.

"No," replies Laible, indifferently, "I didn't expect to see him. I knew of course if he was called away it would be to New York."

"Then you think he will not come back to bid us a formal good-by?" asks Leslie, leaning down over the water.

"I hardly think he will be able to. He will probably send a letter to your father."

It is not until now that Leslie knows how she has been depending upon this chance of seeing Favernel again.

The pretty "Comet" steams up to the landing, and the party embarks. Tom Laible stands, one foot on the landing, and one foot on the boat, and helps the ladies over the narrow plank. "Little mountain maid," he says, as he takes Nell's hand. Poor Nell, the shabbiness of her costume seems quite lost on Mr. Laible, for as the boat pushes off, he takes his place by her as a matter of course. Her heart beats fast, but her resolution does not falter.

"Now you look again just as you did at Upton," says Tom, "just as if you had something on your tongue's end to say to me, something disagreeable."

Nell recalls the episode. The whole scene comes back to her. The sun setting behind the hazy mountains, the faintly stirred bosom of the lake, the dark forest shadows. She remembers how the contrast struck her then, between her own estate and that of the man on the grass at her feet. The con-

trast still remains, only she has forgotten it for a time. Brenton, with its repulsive realities, looms up, bidding its time, but unavoidable. Nell looks around at the gay young people, so well dressed, so refined, and seemingly so happy, looks up at the stately house and grounds they are leaving, and glances at the careless good looking face beside her. It is less careless than usual.

"I believe I began to fall in love with you by Um-bagog," says Tom, musingly.

"Mr. Laible! I should be sorry to think that you do not respect me."

"I respect and honor you above—"

"Then why are you here?"

"Why should I not be here?" asks Tom in unfeigned amazement.

"After what you said to me last night? You said you had come to your senses."

"Ah, to be sure," says Laible slowly, remembering Leslie. "So I did."

"Then why do you stay here? Don't you know that you, as an engaged gentleman are doing me an injury, keeping away the eligible young men who are only waiting for your departure?"

Tom smiles into the flushed face, then rises obediently and moves away. But it is vain to try to reach Leslie, the circle that surrounds her is too dense. Blanche makes another effort to secure her admirer.

"Mr. Laible I depend upon you to help me entertain," she says, drawing near, and speaking confi-

dentially, with the smile that Tom has so often tried vainly to gain from her.

"The task of entertaining is not apt to fall upon one individual at a picnic," he replies coolly.

Blanche can hardly credit her senses; but she soon recovers from her discomfiture. She can afford to ignore trifles.

The arrangements have all been made for an early tea, and the guests sit around in primitive fashion, while Augustus and two of the other servants attend to their wants.

"Regy," whispers Nell, drawing the boy's curly head toward her, "stay with me all you can."

"Why?" asks the boy, having proceeded no further on life's journey than to the honest age.

"Why, 'ilka lassie has her laddie, nane they say have I,' don't you see I'm the odd girl of the company?"

Regy looks around. "Mr. Laible is with Leslie, isn't he?"

"Hush, yes, and you sit down here by me, and no matter who comes, don't you get up and leave me," so Regy obeys, and the girl breathes freely.

Mr. Laible is sitting by Leslie to be sure, but that young lady is engrossed in conversation with the gentleman on her other hand, so Tom is devoting his time to gazing at Nell, and occasionally indulges in pantomime which threatens to result in his changing his position to one in her vicinity. Now let him come. She is protected by Regy, who has remained

her loyal friend ever since that Fourth of July when she won his youthful heart.

"Where is your father?" asks Nell.

"Home," says Regy. "He said he didn't want to come. If there's anything father hates to-day it's one thing more than another."

"I thought so," laughs Nell. "He snubbed me unmercifully this afternoon. Miss Cobb, too, hasn't deigned to honor us."

"I guess Blanche didn't ask her."

"What! After Miss Cobb arranged this handsome supper?"

"Yes; I heard her say that she didn't want any respectable old party to catch rheumatism on her account."

"O, Regy, how can you laugh! I think it would do Miss Appleton good to be kept on bread and water for a month, and I'd like to be her jailor," says Nell, fiercely.

"Pshaw! You'd give her butter the second day, cake and wine the third, and let her out the fourth."

Nell laughs, and Tom Laible plate in hand, and napkin over his arm, rises, and crosses to her. She grows grave immediately.

"Miss Forrest won't speak to me," says Tom apologetically, but with an amused smile. "Won't you let me come and hear what you are saying?"

"This is noted for being a free country, Mr. Laible, but I think you were much better off where you were," replies Nell, coldly.

Mr. Laible does not seem to be offended by his re-

ception. He seats himself deliberately and comfortably on a part of Nell's little grassy knoll.

"Is Regy one of those eligible gentlemen with whom I was not to interfere? If not, I can amuse myself and not hurt you by remaining," and so saying, Tom spreads his napkin over his knees, and proceeds with his meal.

"Regy," he continues, spying Augustus in the distance, "will you kindly go and send that 'unbleached American' over here with the cake?"

"No, no!" exclaims Nell, laying her hand on the boy's arm. "Remember," she says, impressively.

"O nonsense! I'm coming back in a minute," returns Regy, impatiently, looking from Miss Valentine to Laible, and thinking that the former must have deteriorated greatly in bravery since the glorious Fourth. He furthermore adds much to Nell's comfort by asking scornfully, "What are you afraid of?"

"She is afraid of me, Reginald," replies Tom calmly, "but I will bind myself over to keep the peace until you return with the cake—cake is my especial weakness. Give him leave of absence, little lady."

Regy doesn't wait for it, but runs off, leaving Nell indignant, but helpless. She takes refuge in dignified silence.

"I am aware that one should not look too deeply into things of a delicate nature, but the longings and aspirations of the soul will not always be put down," begins Laible, breaking the stillness.

Nell is afraid of what may be coming. She looks desperately in the direction of Regy's roundabout.

"And I really can not help wondering," adds Tom, mysteriously, "whether this salad was not left over from last night. The circumstances are such as to raise one's suspicions."

"O you don't know how I am getting to dislike you, Mr. Laible," laughs Nell. "I was having such a good time with Regy before you came; and Leslie has stopped talking to that gentleman, now," she adds suggestively.

"No, don't you see she has begun again. And she's smiling. I haven't the heart to spoil her pleasure. I'd rather inflict myself upon you," and Laible's expression is so thoroughly contented, that Nell is discouraged, and silence reigns again.

Regy returns with the cake.

"You seem as good as new," he says, grinning at Miss Valentine, who wishes she had not tried to form an alliance with a creature so completely lacking in tact as a boy of twelve.

Lily Island belongs to Fairylands, and the luxuriant, carefully kept grass and trees, show the constant care which is bestowed upon it. There could not be a prettier spot for a picnic, and the beautiful day promises as Nell has said, a beautiful evening. Supper is over, and the twilight hardly closes in when the full moon rises in stately magnificence behind the turrets of the great house on the main land. A half dozen little boats swing idly at their mooring, but no one seems in haste to embark. The scene is

so very beautiful, the guests seem content to sit and feast their eyes. Leslie hears a young lady near her say, "I should think Leslie Forrest would be the happiest girl in the world." "The happiest girl in the world." She muses on the words as she strays away from the others, down the sloping bank and seats herself at the water's edge. She supposes her movement to be unnoticed, but she is hardly seated when Blanche Appleton advances deliberately.

"I want to see you alone a minute, Leslie," she says.

"Well?"

"Don't use that weary tone either, my dear, for it is the best of news I have for you."

Leslie turns eagerly at this. Douglas has perhaps, after all, left a message for her.

"I am going away from here, to-morrow."

"Yes?"

"But for good—*for good*. You don't realize the blessing," laughs Blanche. "Of course you know that I know that you don't like me, but I have had too hard a life to mourn over such a thing as that; and I wouldn't leave so good a home, with so many perquisites, on that account. No, to-morrow morning I shall tell your father that my friends are miserable—*desolé* without me, that I must go to them without an instant's delay. That will be a lie you understand. I'll tell you the truth. Douglas Faverne will give me a fortune if I will go, and we all know that his motive is not that so much money is a burden to him, or that he longs to see Frank

righted. It is simply that he knows you will be freer and happier when I am gone. Now, am I not good natured after all? I see you in the dumps, and Douglas gone away, and I put two and two together and conclude that you have quarreled. Take my advice and be sensible. He adores you. Men don't give away such sums of money without a pretty strong motive. Good-by, perhaps some time we may meet again and be better friends," and she is gone, leaving Leslie speechless, a prey to sharper regret than before. How he has loved her! Is it too late to recall him? In vain she tries to remember any act of hers which could come under the head of coquetry. Her clever management in the avoidance of *tete-à-tete* meetings is all she can accuse herself of, and she does so hotly. Oh, if he would but come now—come back for—

"Les—lie!"

The company beyond her are untying the boats and she must join them. But it was her father's voice that called, and she starts to her feet and hurries in the direction of it.

"Where are you, Leslie—O, here, and by yourself. Well, Favernel, what do you think of a young woman who prefers solitude to the company of such a happy crowd of young people?" asks Mr. Forrest turning to the gentleman behind him. The lawyer's voice has a good natured ring in it. His *bonhomme* has returned with his friend.

"Mr. Favernel has come back to take a little more satisfactory leave of us, my dear; we have been

talking business over there at home this half hour. I hardly thought it would be of any use to try to find you. I thought you would have been off boating by this time."

So she might have been! Leslie, since the first glad shock of surprise, has stood trembling. Now she is conscious of fervent thanksgiving that no such trial as that of missing this visit has been sent her.

"But Mr. Favernel thought he had better make the effort, inasmuch as it is a long farewell we must make him."

"A long farewell?" repeats Leslie.

"Yes, Miss Forrest, I am about starting for India."

"For India!" The girl speaks the words with difficulty and her face is pitifully white in the moonlight.

"Yes. I have always intended to go sometime, and now the opportunity presents itself. Of course I could not leave for an absence, perhaps of years, without saying good-by to you all who have treated me so kindly."

"Kindly! Don't talk about kindness," interrupts Mr. Forrest, impatiently. "I don't know what I'm going to do without you. Dear, dear, there's little enough time to say all I must say to you before you go. Shake hands with Leslie and come. I will drive you to the depot."

Favernel advances to the still white figure and takes her hand in his strong one, and looks wistfully, scrutinizingly at her, as though fearing his memory

of her face might prove untruthful in some particular. Before his return she will be married. He drops the hand.

"Good-by," he says. "I wish you every happiness in life." Then he turns, and Mr. Forrest takes his arm as they walk away.

Leslie looks after them with wild eyes. Is it possible that he can come and go, and she never say one word of all that is in her bursting heart? O, what a wretched, fettered creature a woman is! Doomed to endure the tortures of Tantalus and still remember the proprieties which allow her to give only that which is begged of her. With desperate effort the girl throws off the penetrating languor which envelops her like a garment, and runs until she comes up with her father and his friend.

"I have something more to say to Mr. Favernel," she says, breathlessly, catching her father's arm.

"Well, say it, my dear, say it, there's nothing to prevent," returns Mr. Forrest, impatient of the interruption.

"I must say it to him alone," says Leslie, desperately.

"O nonsense, my dear," he begins, when Favernel comes to Leslie's side and places her hand within his arm.

"Go back to the house if you choose, Mr. Forrest, I will meet you there," he says.

"No I'll wait here for you," returns the elder gentleman, testily, seating himself on a rustic sofa; "be quick, Leslie."

Leslie, frightened almost to death at her own temerity, and trembling like a leaf, is in no condition to speak. Favernel knows it, and as they walk by the water-side says :

“Take your time Miss Forrest, there is no hurry.”

Indeed to him there is no hurry ; missing a few trains, or even the steamer itself is of little consequence compared to the fact that the woman he loves is leaning on his arm, walking alone with him in the moonlight, of her own free will. Silence remains unbroken for a minute save by the plash of an occasional oar, and the strain of a song far away over the water, then Leslie speaks in a low unsteady voice.

“Blanche Appleton has just been telling me of your bribe to her, Mr. Favernel. I could not let you go without thanking you for any part my comfort may have had in your motive.”

“I shall be glad to think of you as separated from her,” says Favernel simply, and says no more. Leslie is in dire distress.

“It is—it is a great deal of money,” she says shyly, “when one remembers that you allow yourself so little. How,” examining the fringe on her dress, which glitters in the moonlight, “how can you afford such a trip? Was yesterday your thirty-fifth birthday?”

Favernel smiles, rather gloomily, and explains that his expenses are to be paid in consideration of the business which he contemplates combining with his prospective pleasure.

"I—I feared last night when you went away so suddenly, not even saying good night to me, that I had offended you."

Favernel looks down into the pure, white face.

"Why do you speak to me so, now? A few days since, you hadn't a kind word for me, and now, but that I know the truth, you would make a fool of me," he says in a repressed voice.

"What truth?"

"Is it hard to guess? Your father had the cruel kindness last night to tell me of your engagement and prospective marriage. I do not dare to think why you did not tell me yourself. I hate to believe that there is a shadow of coquetry about you."

"My father told you that?"

All the shyness and hesitation have vanished from Leslie's manner. She speaks slowly, thoughtfully, and before she again breaks the silence, she has a clue to the truth. A shining joy comes into her eyes, as her fears melt away.

"Yes, I am going to be married," she says quietly.

"The reason I did not tell you before is that I was not sure of myself until last night."

"Was the—gentleman present last evening?" asks Favernel on an uncontrollable impulse.

"Yes, he was there. Bless him!"

The low, loving tone is torture to Douglas. He turns involuntarily. Leslie feels that he is about to leave her. Her heart beats fast.

"May I describe him to you?" she asks hurriedly.

Favernel controls himself and stands still.

"If you like to," he says stiffly.

Leslie looks up at his face, so immovable in the moonlight, and clasps both her hands around his arm. Her voice trembles as she speaks.

"He is tall, and grander looking than any other man. He is good, and unselfish, and high-minded, and forgiving. People call him handsome. I do not think of that any longer. I see only his dear eyes that love me so truly—and I cling close to his arm that can be so tender in its strength!"

Favernel is looking down quietly; but slow, proverbially slow of comprehension as men are on those very occasions when they should be quickest, he is at last understanding that there has been a mistake. Leslie feels his heart throb against her clasped hands.

"Douglas—must I—are you going to make me tell you—?"

"My darling!" exclaims Favernel, unclasping the clinging hands and taking her in his arms, half doubting that he is not dreaming the whole,—then the whisper of the water rippling against the bank, and the breeze through the pines, make themselves heard in the stillness; and the moonlight falls on two lovers who forget that Lily Island is not a desert isle, with only themselves for inhabitants.

But soon a querulous, impatient voice, breaks the spell.

"Favernel! Favernel!" it calls, and Mr. Forrest comes toward them among the trees.

"Well, Favernel, you've lost that train."

"Have I, Mr. Forrest? But I have gained your daughter."

CHAPTER XX.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

"And where she only thought to glean,
She found a harvest round her feet."

—J. G. HOLLAND.

"It is no secret I tell you, nor am I ashamed to declare it ;
I have liked to be with you, to see you, to speak with you always."

—LONGFELLOW.

MR. FORREST, at breakfast the following morning, worries his housekeeper greatly by his unusual behavior. He throws aside the morning paper as if the affairs of the nation had ceased to be of consequence. He hardly touches his food, and yet seems to be in high spirits. He chucks Nell under the chin and tells her she is growing handsome. He asks Regy if he would like to stay at home from school and go fishing with Mr. Laible and himself; and altogether says and does much to confirm Miss Cobb in her opinion that her relative is a lax man.

Leslie does not appear. Miss Cobb shakes her head and sighs. She longs for the old days when Leslie was not pale and silent, when there was no company, and when the affairs of the household proceeded in a comparatively methodical and systematic manner.

"I wonder when Blanche will make her appearance," says Mr. Forrest.

"Her breakfast has gone up," returns Miss Dorothy shortly; "she'll be down soon."

"We will wait here until she comes. I have something to announce."

"Can't you go into the library?" asks Miss Cobb, always keen for system, and more anxious that the servants should attend to their work at the proper time than to hear any news whatever. "Every one seems to have finished," she adds suggestively.

"I think we will stay where we are," replies Mr. Forrest, with exasperating calmness, "we are situated rather comfortably," and again, as Nell is his next neighbor, he pats her shoulder and again tells her that she has gained flesh and good looks at Fairylands, which is true, but somewhat embarrassing for Nell, as Mr. Laible sits opposite her, and, as he has finished breakfast, has nothing better to do than watch his *vis-à-vis*. All are silent. Miss Cobb fidgets in her chair, and the bulfinch, who has almost finished shedding his feathers, practices up on fragments of his song, preparatory to the Winter campaign.

Regy rolls napkin rings, and builds houses with the delicate goblets, placing them in such precarious positions that Miss Dorothy feels herself grow thin under the infliction.

For five minutes they sit thus before Miss Appleton is heard on the stairs. She is humming, and that, with Blanche, suggests that she is at peace with all mankind.

In obedience to her guardian's call the young lady comes to the door.

"Not through breakfast!" she exclaims, "and Leslie not even down yet? I thought I was the only lazy one in the family."

"Come in, my dear, and sit in Leslie's place," and Blanche obeys, conscious by this time that something of interest is in the air.

"I have something to tell you all," begins Mr. Forrest, "which relates to our friend, Douglas Favernel."

Every face at the table shows interest.

"When he left us so suddenly on the night of the party, it was not, as I supposed, to go immediately to New York. He remained in Boston. Yesterday, he made up his mind to go to India."

Tom Laible exclaims and leans forward.

"He came here last evening to bid us good-by. It was just as you were starting out in the boats that we crossed to the island to find my daughter Leslie."

Mr. Forrest pronounces the last three words with unusual pride, and three consciences in the room accuse their owners of carelessness as to his daughter Leslie's movements the night before.

"While on the island, Mr. Favernel gave up his India plan, and right here I will say to my cousin Dorothy that I have misled her as to a certain love affair, as she will remember. I am happier to-day than I ever was in my life; happier than if I had gained a million dollars, and I call upon you all to

rejoice in my joy. My daughter Leslie, is to marry my dear friend Douglas Favernel ! ”

If Mr. Forrest has been talking to produce an effect he must certainly be satisfied.

Miss Cobb sits opposite him, her face wearing the perfectly vacant expression which, with her, indicates extremest surprise.

But to no one does the news bring so complete a revulsion of feeling as to Nell Valentine. She understands Mr. Forrest's allusion to the mistaken love affair, and realizes in a moment that Tom Laible has never been engaged to Leslie ; and she remembers the officious little scolding she gave him, and realizes how absurd it must have sounded. She raises her eyes to his and finds his smiling gaze bent upon her, and knows he is reading her thoughts. Her hot blushes mount furiously over brow and cheek, and she wishes fervently that the floor of the dining room might give way and deposit her in the shades of the cellar.

Mr. Forrest rises.

“ Now I want everybody to understand that this is a grand holiday. Mr. Laible, no business for us to-day, sir ! Ah, you little know how I have been befooled about you.”

“ I begin to have a slight inkling, Mr. Forrest, and although I do not understand the means by which it was brought about, I realize that I have obtained a valuable gift from you under false pretences, and when I have returned it I shall only be

where I was before, with the extra advantage of the association I have enjoyed with you."

Mr. Forrest walks around the table and the two men shake hands.

"Let there be no talk of returning gifts, either now or in the future. I have been very glad to shift trouble, which I did not care to sustain, upon your young shoulders, and may do it again. Why, hang it, man, I never began to like you so well as to-day when I know you are not going to be my son-in-law."

Laible laughs, not at all offended by his host's speech, and Nell jumps up from the table, for Leslie has just come silently in at the door. In an instant she is surrounded. Even Miss Cobb forgets that the dining room is not the proper place for a family gathering out of meal hours, and sheds a few happy tears as she wishes her beloved child joy.

"You deceptive, unprincipled girl," is Nell's public comment. She reserves anything more tender for the "good long talk" she knows that she and Leslie will have when next they are alone.

Blanche comes forward with a gracious, knowing nod of the head, as she takes both Leslie's hands.

"Took my advice, didn't you? Well, you will have a splendid husband. And now for the carrying out of my programme," and she turns to Mr. Forrest, whom she draws aside in order to explain why she must leave his hospitable roof without delay.

Then Mr. Lamkin puts in his word.

"I congratulate you, I'm sure, Miss Leslie," he says, shaking her hand in his undecided fashion. "I told you," he continues more cheerfully, "that some more worthy fellow would get you, some one who hadn't so much else to think of," here his gaze wanders back to the table where his phosphate awaits him.

"What am I to understand from that, Miss Forrest?" asks Tom, as they cross the hall to the library. "Did the Lamkin really — pop, you know?"

Leslie laughs—the little tearful laugh that Mr. Lamkin's eccentricities always elicit from her.

"He did endure considerable anguish one evening on my account," she says, "not for fear I wouldn't accept him, but for fear I would."

"Have you sufficiently considered the thing?" asks Tom seriously. "I am not sure but that he needs you more than Douglas does. I understand that he has rheumatism severely at times. He told me himself that he has suffered everything—that his mother often has to soothe his woes with a hot flat-iron. Now Miss Forrest," pursues Tom, "you should be philanthropic, you should aim high in a matrimonial alliance. I don't believe that Douglas ever has to be ironed."

"Eh? What?" asks Mr. Forrest, coming in and looking eagerly around. "Did you say Douglas was here? No. I think I'll drive down and bring him; shall I Leslie?"

"I suppose he will come of himself if you give him time," replies the girl.

She can but be amused at a certain deference in her father's manner to her since last evening.

"I may as well go," says Mr. Forrest, and as he hurries out of the room, Nell laughs.

"You'll have no chance to speak to Mr. Favernel, except over your father's shoulder, see if you do. He is completely in love with him, himself."

"Miss Forrest," says Tom with mischievous eyes, "I am going to take a walk. Do you think if you tell Miss Valentine you wish her to take care of me that she will come too?"

"Nell, do you know this man made me say that to you the night of the party; he said there was a mystic power in the request. What did he mean?"

"I'll tell you sometime what he meant," replies Nell, with dignity, "but the power has all departed now. I don't care to walk this morning, Mr. Laible."

Leslie considers this the vanishing point. A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind, and she suddenly remembers that she wants to have a good talk with her cousin Dorothy, to atone for the long restraint between them; so she goes to the butler's pantry where, if all the rest of the universe were in an uproar, Miss Cobb would still stand and wash her silver and glass, so long as the four walls stood.

When Leslie has gone, Tom speaks again.

"You had better come; Douglas will be here soon, and you will feel dreadfully *de trop*."

"Fairylands is large; I think I can keep out of the way."

"Miss Valentine," he says, trying to speak gravely, "don't you think I deserve something in the way of a reward of merit for the exemplary meekness with which I took all the hard words you gave me the other night? You know now I didn't deserve them."

"Mr. Laible, if you dare to make fun of me about that I will never forgive you," and Nell's eyes flash through tears. "It is too humiliating that I should have been so deceived, and you led me on, you know you did, saying all that about coming to your senses."

"My little Nell, every word I said was true. I have come to my senses. You do hold my happiness in your hands. Do you love me?"

Nell is silent a moment, turning away her head, although she allows her hands to be taken. Then :

"Mr. Laible," she says slowly, "I'm afraid you feel very sure of me."

"My darling, do you resent that? Do you resent that I seem to have loved you always, always to have welcomed your presence in a room and regretted your absence from it, and that I thank God for the belief that I possess your warm generous heart?" and Laible brings her face close to him. "You have nothing to defend yourself from in me, do not fear or hesitate to put your happiness in my keeping, for you shall never regret it, my little love, so long as we both live."

The sunshine streams in through the stained glass, touching the pictures and statuary with rainbow tints, and lies in a long warm stripe of color across the floor. Laible stands in silence, waiting for Nell to look up, which she does at last, giving way completely to her great bliss. Brenton and its trials fade like a dissolving view. Before her stretches the vista of a life, not untroubled, perhaps, but welcome with whatever it may bring, for the sake of the man by her side.

"But!" she exclaims suddenly, "no one will ever believe how heroic and self-sacrificing I was going to be. Why, I was going to give you up to Leslie. I really was."

"I am infinitely obliged."

"But that was yesterday. To-day I couldn't do it; so there goes my last hope of heroism."

"I don't know about that," responds Tom, looking down at her tenderly, "you have in you the stuff that heroines are made of."

Nell shakes her head. "Unless Blanche Appleton should appear upon the scene again I can not imagine anything happening after this to give me cause to distinguish myself."

Laible frowns slightly. "You have bade Miss Appleton good-by, and she has gone. That is enough. Let us not talk of her."

"O yes, she is gone, or going," assents Twinkle, nodding slowly, "but that will not prevent her coming back. Did it never occur to you that she had set her heart upon marrying Douglas Favernel?"

Depend upon it she would like to change *fiancés* with Leslie."

"Very likely, but even if Miss Forrest were to consent to such an arrangement, Frank Favernel would not. He is a devoted lover."

Nell shakes her head skeptically. "He loves money better than anything or anybody in this world, and I am confident that he would agree to take Leslie's, at any price of truth or honor."

Tom imprisons the speaker's restless little hands.

"What a cruel judge for so small a one! Whether you are right or wrong will never be tested, and certainly our first difference must not occur upon a subject of so little importance to us as the love affairs of that couple," he says.

Nell's coloring grows beautiful under his ardent gaze.

"Life is not long enough for all we must say to each other, Twinkle!"

CHAPTER XXI.

A DARING SCHEME.

"What gifts God gave you ! Think of it !
A form well-fashioned, strong and tall,
A face all manliness, and all
A woman loves."

—JOAQUIN MILLER.

ALTHOUGH Fairylands has indeed taken on magical charms for him, Tom Laible can not forget that he is only a young lawyer with a fortune yet to make, so, after a day or two more spent in the society of his bewitching lady-love, he leaves for New York, inspired by a new and powerful motive, to work as he has never done before in all his easy *insouciant* life.

Notes from Twinkle, enchanting compounds of nonsense and earnestness, petting and scolding, appear daily among his serious morning mail, and what with these and the tantalizing shortness of the distance which separates him from her, it is not wonderful that by the time three weeks have passed, Mr. Laible finds that business calls him imperatively to Boston.

As he gives no warning of his intended visit, there is no one to meet him upon his arrival at the Lawndale station ; so he walks rapidly along the winding road amid the Autumn foliage, and amuses himself by picturing Twinkle's start of surprise, and

the near-sighted, peering look, which will precede her joyful recognition of him. He smiles at the pleasant fancy, and the smile is still on his lips as he reaches the broad gates of Fairylands.

"This is the loveliest place in the world," he says warmly, under his breath.

Passing in, he nearly stumbles against a small figure stooping over a bed of scarlet geraniums, close beside one of the pillars.

Nell rises, uttering a suppressed scream.

Tom, with a happy exclamation, takes her in his arms; but all his anticipations vanish as she bursts into tears.

"Why Twinkle—Nell—what is it? Are you so glad to see me, or did I frighten you?"

"Yes," she says, trying to look up. "You frightened me. Every thing frightens me to-day."

"My darling child, what is it? What has happened?" asks Laible, filled with apprehension by her manner and the paleness of her face.

"It is only that. I am nervous. Think of it, I who am never nervous!" replies Nell, allowing herself to be led to the nearest seat.

"I ought to have warned you of my visit. I would not have startled you, dear—you know."

"I know. It was right. It would have delighted me but for my foolish state. It *does* delight me," and Twinkle lifts her eyes. There are tears in them, notwithstanding the familiar smile. "I have a great mind to tell you," she says slowly and thoughtfully, still looking at him.

"Of course you will tell me everything, and before we leave this spot," returns Tom, decisively.

A little rebellious sparkle comes into Nell's eyes, and her tears dry.

"You order me to tell you. Do I understand you?"

"Not in an offensive way. I claim the privilege of sharing your sorrows, heavy or light, that is all."

Nell's face wears an odd expression as she still looks at him.

"Then, dear, if you are determined to share my troubles heavy or light, I shall tell you all that inclines me to be unstrung and hysterical to-day, and you shall say if the weakness is not pardonable. In the first place my presentiment that we had not seen the last of Miss Appleton and Frank Favernel, was not so groundless as you thought. We have not seen Miss Appleton to be sure, but her lover has been here repeatedly, and through him we have felt her."

"Why should the fellow wish to come here?"

"Apparently for the purpose of annoying Leslie. You know that as soon as she became engaged to Douglas she begged him to let his beard grow again in order to look as unlike Frank as possible; and he of course complied. More than a week ago Leslie was sitting by the window one day, and saw, as she supposed, Douglas coming up the drive. She flew down stairs and out doors, but just as she came close to him, he seized her hand and held her off at arm's length. She looked at him in amazement. It was Douglas' hat and clothes and there was no

doubting the interesting stubble on his chin; but the creature spoke, and announced himself to be Frank. Imagine Leslie's sensations. Well, not to dwell on particulars, he managed to meet her somewhere every day; always on such an innocent errand, and in so accidental a manner that there was no reasonable cause for complaint, and he was careful never to encounter Douglas. It made Leslie very nervous. She lived in constant dread of mistaking one brother for the other. I feared she would be ill and I said one day to Mr. Favernel that he ought to do something about it. It was at that time that I went into Boston to make the visit I wrote you of, and two days ago I received a note from Leslie, saying that to relieve her mind Douglas had shaved his face,—moustache and all and that it had changed him so dreadfully, she was heart-broken. Yesterday I came home to find that he had gone to New York on business. Leslie mourned a good deal over his departure, for she felt as though she needed the whole of the month before their marriage to get used to his new face—for you know they were to have been married in a month."

"Are to be married in a month, you mean!" exclaims Tom.

"Were to have been," repeats Nell, sadly. "Don't interrupt me, Tom, dear, I will make it as short as I can, and it will be easier for me to tell it as though it were a chapter in a book, just as I have gone over it so often in my own mind to-day."

So Twinkle, her hand clasped in Laible's, continues

her recital. As she speaks, her color comes and goes, but she does not hesitate. The scene she describes seems burnt into her memory—the parts of which she was not actual witness, being supplied either by her imagination or from after knowledge.

It was early yesterday afternoon that Leslie and Nell were sitting in the cheerful library. Suddenly they saw a buggy drive past the window, and up to the *porte cochère*.

“Can that be Douglas!” exclaimed Leslie. “It is, and Mr. Denning is with him.”

“Your minister? Perhaps you are to be married out of hand, Leslie,” suggested Nell.

But Leslie had no time to reply. The door opened and the two gentlemen came in. She advanced to her lover with a beaming expression. “Home so soon,” she said, then turned to the minister, “I am happy to see you, Mr. Denning.”

The genial looking old gentleman shook her hand cordially.

“Thank you, Leslie; I presume I bring my welcome with me in this young man. He astonished me well, I assure you. I would not believe his identity until he showed me his credentials in the shape of a letter from your father.”

“That—Mr. Favernel,” said Nell slowly, staring as though at a ghost.

“I told you how changed he was,” returned Leslie. “What is it Douglas? You have some bad news to tell me,” and indeed Mr. Favernel did look dead-

ly pale, and constantly drew his handkerchief across his forehead.

Mr. Denning looked from one to the other with a troubled expression.

"Miss Valentine, you and I had better step into the drawing room a few minutes and leave these friends; and remember, Leslie my child," and the minister took Leslie's hand, "it detracts nothing from the sacredness of the marriage tie if the bride is not surrounded by the pomps and vanities of the world; the only cause for regret is your father's absence, which you will see is unavoidable, while a year hence so practically slight a drawback will have ceased to be of consequence," then Mr. Denning and Nell withdrew, leaving Leslie bewildered.

She moved quickly to Favernel. "What does it mean, dear," she said. "I am so happy that you came back, but feel almost afraid to hear what brought you, you look so badly. Tell me what has happened."

"It is nothing; I did feel ill for the moment, but it is only lack of sleep; I have not closed my eyes since seeing you last. Upon arriving in New York, what was my surprise to find that my presence in Liverpool is imperatively necessary, just as soon as I can possibly get there. I at once turned around and started for Boston, for of course I can not leave you, and yet there is no escape, I must go."

For a moment Leslie is too overcome to speak.

"Why need you go? she says. "It would be better to lose money, I should think."

"You do not understand, Leslie, and it would take me a long time to explain. You know," adds Favernel reproachfully, "that I should not insist if it were not necessary. I know it is a great thing I ask of you, to marry me within an hour, and leave Boston this very night; but think, darling, is it not better than separation? I can not tell how long I may have to be away."

"I have not my wedding dress," returns Leslie, feeling dazed and wretched.

"Would you, just for a whim, postpone our wedding indefinitely? Think of what Mr. Denning has just said, and if that is not enough, here;" and Favernel takes a letter from his pocket and hands it to Leslie.

She opens it with trembling fingers and reads as follows:

MY DEAR CHILD,

The time has come to prove whether you are a sentimental girl or a true woman, willing to renounce a few vanities, and to endure some trouble and inconvenience for the sake of her husband. Favernel must go, and it is clearly your duty to go with him. I can not see you married, but you shall get yourself up in your wedding dress and let me look at you, when you return. I will see you when you come into the city, and wish you God speed. In great haste,

YOUR FATHER.

Leslie's eyes rest a moment on the odd characteristic writing, and when she raises them there is a pained look in their depths.

"I require an hour," she says quietly. "Regy will be here then, and I can not be married without either my father or my brother to wish me joy, but

I did not need that my father should write to me in this tone. This sudden marriage is a disappointment; you do not blame me for feeling so, Douglas, and you will make me forget the trying circumstances afterward?" and the girl's face is touching in its wistfulness.

"My life will not be long enough to repay you, my darling," Favernel exclaims fervently, covering her hands with kisses, then she leaves the room and goes upstairs, while the news spreads like wildfire, that Miss Leslie is to be married in an hour.

Miss Cobb stares in amazement as Leslie tells her of the sudden determination.

"You are not going to consent," is all she says.

"I have consented," replies the girl; "we must be ready in an hour."

"I forbid it," bursts forth the housekeeper; "it can not be right. Why, where is your father, child; you surely do not intend to proceed without him?"

Leslie produces the letter, and Miss Cobb peruses it, muttering; then looks up with angry eyes.

"And you are going to submit to this?"

"Since it is necessary. Of the two evils, papa's absence is slight, compared to that of letting Douglas go without me."

There is a fixed determination in the girl's tone which Miss Cobb is wise enough not to battle. She sees that all she might say on the opposite side would only strengthen Leslie's decision.

"Don't look so vexed, cousin Dorothy," says the

latter, gently, "each of us must bear her share of the disappointment."

"And how much time did you say there is before the ceremony?" asks the housekeeper in the same excited tone.

"An hour, and that is rapidly growing less. I did not think you would desert me at a time like this; even Mr. Denning tells me it is my duty, and surely it is hard enough that Douglas should look so strange to me, and the whole thing be so sudden, without your being cold and disapproving."

"My own precious child," exclaims the housekeeper, losing her self control and clasping the girl in her arms. "I can't feel that it is right, but God bless you in all you do," and Miss Cobb sobs violently for a minute. "There, go, dear, and forgive me," so saying she releases Leslie and hurries down-stairs, for the bride is no more fixed in her determination than is Dorothy Cobb in hers. Henry Forrest's laxity, has, in her opinion, passed all limit, and if it is the last act of her life she will bring him to his only daughter's wedding.

She finds Augustus, and while she writes a telegram on a slip of paper, she gives him hurried and minute instructions, and for once gives them in a low tone of voice. Then she watches from the window, until she sees her messenger mounted on a fast horse, galloping down the road. When he is out of sight she turns and goes up-stairs, calculating the amount of time it will take her relative to reach

Fairylands, for she feels sure that he will come. Her telegram reads:

"Drive out at once. Case of life and death. Dorothy Cobb."

So the housekeeper, with a heart somewhat lightened, though heavy still, goes about the work of preparation.

There is something strange and weird in the atmosphere of the house which is still as death. Below stairs the bridegroom and minister do not exchange a word. The one paces the floor in excited cogitations, the other occupies himself in reading, and looking over engravings.

Up-stairs, hurried but quiet preparations are made for the sudden move. Miss Cobb and Nell devote themselves to the packing of a large trunk with part of the trousseau, all of which but the wedding dress has been sent home. They can hardly see for the blinding tears that fall thick and fast, but scarce a word is spoken between them. For once Nell has no power of utterance. Everything, all the prettily laid plans, have been too suddenly inverted. She tries to think that there is a very pleasant side to it all for Leslie; she will have a trip to Europe, and speedily forget the disappointment; but no, the thought brings no comfort with it, the sky has suddenly clouded over and the dolefulness in the air persists in making itself felt.

In her own room, without assistance, the bride makes her toilet. Had Favernel been in his usual strong, joyous mood, she could have met this un-

looked-for emergency with a brighter face than that which looks back at her from her mirror ; but he is pre-occupied with business cares and unlike himself, and for the first time during their happy engagement, a reproachful feeling creeps into Leslie's mind with regard to her lover. He does not seem to realize how much she needs to be sustained at this time, and does not try, as she knows it is in his power to do, to make her overlook the forlornness of it all.

The elegant dark green dress, heavy with embroidery, is ready, and Leslie, with trembling fingers adjusts the hat with its shining feathers of changeable green. Then she takes a last look in the glass, and seats herself by the window to listen for the sound of wheels that will herald Regy's approach. At last it comes, and soon his step and whistle are heard in the hall below, and she sends for him to come to her.

As the boy enters the room she holds out her hand to him.

"Regy, dear," she says, "I am going to be married this afternoon, and have only been waiting for you."

Regy give a low whistle of astonishment.

"Mr. Favernel has to go to Europe immediately, so our plans are changed. He and Mr. Denning are down stairs now, waiting."

"Going to be married without father?"

"Yes, Regy, with nobody but you, of those who are really near to me," and the brown eyes fill with

tears. "I can not help feeling a little forlorn," she adds, with a brave attempt at smiling, "but you will not forget to write to me often, will you, dear?"

"I say it's a shame, a mean shame," asserts the boy, fighting the emotion he considers unmanly. "It isn't like father, or Mr. Favernel either, to let you get married like this."

"Don't make me lose my courage, dear—O Regy, you are all I have!" exclaims the girl, clasping her brother in her arms, and giving way for a minute to tears that mingle with his; but Regy is the first to gain self-control.

"I ought to be ashamed of crying myself and letting you cry. Give it up, Leslie, and let him go alone. Do. You'll get his letters, and—"

"No, O no," replies the girl, her tears effectually dried by the suggestion; then she bathes her eyes, and brother and sister go down stairs to the library, where the ceremony is to be performed.

Miss Cobb and Nell, the minister and the groom, stand waiting.

"In three-quarters of an hour my father's train arrives," says Leslie, as she enters, "he may have changed his mind, he may come." Even as she speaks she avoids Favernel's face, almost involuntarily. Each time she sees it as yet, is only a new shock. .

"It will not do for us to wait," he replies, gently but decidedly. "The train which we must take to town leaves Lawndale five minutes before that one

arrives, and Mr. Forrest, you know, is expecting to meet us in the city."

Regy looks at Favernel closely. It is the first time he has seen him since his transformation. He is dissatisfied with the strangeness of his appearance, dissatisfied with everything about this sudden marriage, so different from what has been planned, and the brother for whom the ceremony has been postponed, appears not to appreciate the honor.

Favernel draws Leslie into the bay window.

"My generous darling," he says, "you must not regret this too much, it can easily be explained among your friends. Try only to remember that henceforth we shall not be separated."

"That satisfies me," and the brown eyes meet his earnestly; "it is of no use regretting what can not be helped, but I wish very much that I had been given time to become used to your new face. I am foolish I know, but," with a shudder, "you do remind me of Frank this afternoon."

Favernel laughs nervously. "I am said to resemble him. Don't be fanciful, Leslie."

"No, I have no need to be fanciful, the circumstances are sufficient in themselves. To be married unexpectedly, to a stranger, without my father, is quite enough without imagining anything further." The girl smiles sadly.

"I have no wish to force you into this, Leslie, it is not too late, say the word and I will go alone—but Oh! you can not be so cruel."

"No; not to myself or to you."

Meanwhile Regy has moved to Miss Cobb's side.

"I hate this kind of a wedding, cousin Dorothy."

"It is a hard, trying set of circumstances that has brought it about, my dear," replies the excited lady, whose ears are strained for the sound of wheels, and whose heart flutters and beats as she has never supposed it would again in this world. Each time Mr. Denning moves, she fears it is to begin the ceremony, and she starts as nervously as Mr. Lamkin could do. She looks at her dear child as she stands in the window listening to Favernel. What a strange face it is for a bride; so pale and thoughtful. The down-cast look bears no trace of shyness, only a grave effort at self-control. Miss Cobb feels fairly weighed down with a sense of responsibility. Will Henry Forrest never come? Regy, seeing that the ceremony is not to be instantly performed, goes out into the hall. How he wishes he were Leslie's older instead of younger brother, and had power to prevent this wedding. Why, this man in the parlor might even be Frank Favernel, his face looks so strange to them all; nothing would be easier than for him to deceive every one of them. As Regy ponders upon this possibility, he pulls over Favernel's overcoat, and diving into one of the pockets, draws out a handkerchief. The boy examines the mark; F. F. His face flushes with excitement, and he hurriedly searches the other pockets, but finds nothing more to confirm his suspicions; so, dropping the coat, he goes back into the library, and coming close to Miss Cobb, secretly shows her the mark.

The housekeeper looks into the boy's excited face. "No, Regy," she says; "not possible. He might easily be carrying his brother's handkerchief."

Regy's face falls, but he has suggested an idea to Miss Dorothy that she wonders has not occurred to her before. She does not dare offend Leslie and her lover by asking any questions, but she sends up a fervent prayer that the bride's father may arrive in time. The dreadful suspicion can not be well founded; there is Mr. Forrest's note to prove that all is at least honorable.

Mr. Denning rises. "If there is nothing more to wait for, we will proceed," he says in a formal manner.

Favernel smiles questioningly upon Leslie and offers his arm. She takes it, and they move forward and stand before the minister. Nell Valentine has ceased crying, and stands gazing fixedly at Leslie's sweet, white face. Miss Cobb holds her handkerchief to her eyes and silence reigns in the room, unbroken save by the rustling of the leaves as the minister turns them. The bride strives to banish all regret from her heart. It is enough to be Douglas Favernel's wife. She should be willing, she thinks, to gain that position by a thorny path if necessary, and the words of her father's note return to her: "Now is the time to show whether you are a sentimental girl or a true woman."

Miss Cobb's heart leaps in great bounds. She drops her handkerchief and looks at her watch. "Oh!

for five minutes, only five minutes!" she thinks, and stepping forward says:

"Excuse me, Leslie, your dress is twisted," and stooping down makes a feint of arranging the dress, while all stand waiting.

Finally Leslie looks down at her in surprise.

"That will do, cousin Dorothy," she says gently, and Miss Cobb is forced to take her place, listening, always listening, in the silence.

Mr. Denning has found his page, and looks over his glasses at the bridal pair. Miss Cobb's face is scarlet.

"Excuse me," she says again; "it is ill-luck not to wear something borrowed. Leslie has nothing on that is not her own."

Every one but Regy looks at the housekeeper in surprise and displeasure.

"Forgive me, dear," she says, piteously, to Leslie. "Will you not wait till I run up-stairs and get my fan or some trifle? I am superstitious about it."

The bride looks surprised at her cousin's odd demeanor.

"It will not be necessary to go up-stairs," she says, softly, "Nell, let me hold the handkerchief you have in your hand," so Nell hands her the handkerchief, and resumes her place.

Favernel flashes one quick, angry glance at the housekeeper, then, after a moment of silence, the service begins. At each sentence the bridegroom's face becomes clearer. Occasionally he looks at the woman he is soon to call wife, and occasionally

shifts his position slightly. He is the only one present who is restless. The bride and her friends might be carved from stone for all the movement they make. Dorothy Cobb only listens, more and more intently.

Solemnly the words drop from the minister's lips in the stillness. "Douglas, will you take this woman?"—and Favernel replies, clearly and hurriedly, "I will."

The faint sound of wheels is heard at last. The housekeeper can scarcely keep silence. Nearer and nearer they come.

"Leslie, will you take this man—"

As Mr. Denning begins the question, Leslie looks up at the face beside her. There is a sudden movement of Favernel's mouth that turns her cold from head to foot. It is a mannerism of Frank's that she knows well. Starting forward, she grasps Mr. Denning's arm, and before the minister has time to feel surprise, the door of the library flies open and Mr. Forrest and Douglas Favernel walk in.

"Denning what are you doing!" exclaims the former.

The old man turns, and seeing Douglas, stands petrified, his mouth still open, as if to finish his dropped sentence.

Leslie turns whiter, looks from one brother to the other with an expression like that of a hunted animal in her eyes. Again that fearful resemblance has pursued her, this time almost to her ruin. The face of the man beside her is covered with alternate

flushes and pallor. That of her lover wears a set, stern expression. She moves across to him, quickly, noiselessly as a shadow, and lifting her hands until they rest upon his broad shoulders, for the first time in her life faints entirely away.

Douglas takes her in his arms with no softening of the hard look, scarcely seeming conscious of his own movement he lays her on a lounge where Miss Cobb and Nell attend her; then he advances to his brother, who stands grasping a chair for support, his eyes fixed upon the floor, a miserable picture of detected guilt.

Douglas' gaze seems to force Frank to look up and speak.

"I might say with the first man—'the woman tempted me.' I am but an instrument. Blanche—"

An exclamation of ineffable disgust from his brother, silences him.

"You have tried to do worse than murder me!" ejaculates Douglas, with effort.

"Well, I was willing to risk it. I have lost and am in your power," and in spite of himself Frank's face expresses abject fear.

Douglas shakes his head, and it is evident to all present that the false brother is speaking truth, that Douglas has concealed and forgiven offences before this.

"You need not fear for your personal liberty," he says, "but you and I can never breathe the same air again. I give you twenty-four hours to leave the country. If you do not obey me," with a significant

look, "expect to pay the penalty." Frank makes an effort to assume his old confident air as he turns to the company. Mr. Forrest, white with horror, stands near the head of his unconscious daughter, and it is at him that Favernel looks as he speaks.

"My friends, you are witnesses that sometimes all is not considered fair in love and war. I hope Miss Appleton will not hear of this affair until I am in mid-ocean, for I expect she will not be pleasant company when she learns that her final scheme has fallen through. Perhaps Mr. Forrest will employ her in his office, when he sees the proof of her ability to write a fine legal hand. Douglas, you have won again. I admit that you have treated me far better than I have treated you, and to prove my gratitude I will obey you to the letter. I have already engaged passage for two on the Assyria which leaves this evening. Unfortunately——"

"That will do," speaks Douglas, advancing a few steps. His speech is very quiet, but something in his look and manner causes his brother to turn and leave the room with rather undignified haste, and not a look behind him.

Miss Cobb's vigorous rubbing, and Nell's salts, begin to take effect as the door closes behind Frank Favernel, and Leslie opens her eyes to find Douglas kneeling beside her.

"Where is—the other?" she asks hesitatingly.

"Gone forever," replies Douglas.

Mr. Denning has dropped into a chair. "My friends," he gasps, "I shall never forget this scene

while I live, neither shall I ever be able to forget that I had nearly been the innocent means of ruining two lives," and the old man's head drops in his hands.

"Do not repent your part, Mr. Denning," says Leslie. "I assure you that you were my only comfort. Your familiar face did me good when I was near to giving way."

"Very questionable good, my dear," says the minister, shaking his head and looking mournfully into the fire. "Oh! the incredible wickedness in this world. But you, Mr. Forrest, were also deceived, as we saw by the letter."

"Papa never wrote that letter," says Leslie excitedly. "We know it is the work of one upon whom he has heaped benefits which have been repaid, time after time, in ways only less wicked than this," and the girl takes the letter from her pocket and hands it to her father.

The lawyer takes the note, reads it, then crumpling it in his hand, throws it into the fire.

"I have been in the wrong," he says in a sharp voice, "let that admission suffice; and understand, all of you, that I never wish to hear my ward's name mentioned again."

There is silence for a moment. All know how keenly Mr. Forrest feels the discovery of Blanche's ingratitude, both as a pain, and a mortification at being duped.

Leslie is in no hurry for speech. She lies on the lounge, serenely happy to be in a haven of rest after her great peril, with Douglas and her father beside

her, and the counterfeit lover gone, she knows not where, it is enough that Douglas says it is forever; but Miss Valentine's curiosity is not so easily repressed.

"Tell us how Heaven brought you here in time," she says. "Did you fly from New York, Mr. Favernel, and you from Boston Mr. Forrest?"

"We came pretty near it," replies the latter.

"He means that a pair of fast horses brought us in quick time," says Favernel in answer to Nell's puzzled look; then with eyes resting on Leslie, and one hand holding hers as though otherwise she might vanish, he continues his explanation.

"I have not been to New York at all. Just as I was about to start, I received news which altered matters so that I could arrange my business quite as well by remaining in Boston; but there was considerable to be done, telegraphing and so on, and knowing that Leslie believed me to be out of town, I determined to devote myself to it and have it over. I did not get entirely through until this afternoon, early, when I surprised Mr. Forrest by walking into his office."

Here Mr. Forrest interrupts.

"And not more than five minutes afterward, Dorothy, your telegram came; and a good thing it was that Favernel happened to be there. Of course we knew Leslie must be concerned, and while I should only have been thinking about it, he had horses ready, and we started; and as you say, Nell, we flew. Dorothy, but for you—" and the grateful

father holds out his hand to the housekeeper, not daring to trust himself to speak further.

"Henry, you have risen several degrees in my estimation since I learned that you did not write that letter," is all she says, as she shakes the offered hand cordially.

"You have saved my wife for me, Miss Cobb," says Favernel; "whatever we have will always be yours."

"Cousin Dorothy, the best friend I ever had," and Leslie draws the housekeeper's face down and kisses her tenderly.

Miss Cobb moves away to a window, where she stands wiping her eyes vigorously.

"It is all like a miserable nightmare; but we have wakened from it, and let us forget it as quickly as we can," says Nell in her vehement way, and the housekeeper responds with an earnest "Amen."

"Great heavens!" exclaims Tom, as Nell pauses, his own face pale, and his eyes dilated; "but that that scoundrel has fled the country, I would horse-whip him myself, if Douglas would not."

"What is this about me? Glad to see you, Tom," says Douglas, appearing among the trees with Leslie on his arm.

Laible stares at the pair, at first eagerly, then in stupefied amazement. What sight could be more charming than Leslie, in her simple dress of white flannel with a bunch of scarlet flowers at her belt, the Autumn sunshine falling all about her; but it is *not upon her fresh young beauty that Laible's gaze*

lingers. His eyes are riveted on Favernel's moustache. Each hair in that graceful and becoming appendage appears suddenly to have gained an individual interest.

Douglas endures the fascinated stare for a few seconds, and then looks over his own shoulder in quest of some object worthy of making so startling an impression on his friend. Seeing nothing he turns back.

"Where is it, Tom?" he inquires. "Does it look like Hamlet's father, or a more modern one?"

Laible turns slowly to his *fiancée*.

"Nell Valentine," he asks sternly, "what was the cause of that recital?"

"Thomas Laible," she responds, holding her eyeglasses firmly on her saucy little nose. "I am not sure, but I strongly suspect that it was olives and cheese indulged in at an unearthly hour!"

"O you are too bad, Twinkle," says Leslie, with a laugh. "You have been telling him your dreadful dream."

Nell tries to look injured, but a mischievous gratification sends dancing lights into her eyes.

"He volunteered to share all my sorrows, heavy and light. He *insisted* upon it. Isn't the nightmare a sorrow?"

Tom falls back upon the seat, worn out with the unwonted sympathetic strain of the past hour. He looks at the lady of his heart in impotent fury for half a minute, then gives vent to his outraged feelings in one comprehensive burst:

"Twinkle—you rascal!"

CHAPTER XXII.

ON THE THRESHOLD.

"Then before all they stand,—the holy vow
And ring of gold, no fond illusions now,
Bind her as his."—SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"DREAMS always go by contraries." There has never been more convincing proof of the correctness of the old adage, than that offered by the happy, uneventful weeks of Leslie's short engagement, culminating in the light, gaiety and buzz of a modern, orthodox wedding reception.

In deep-seated contentment, perhaps Miss Cobb holds the place next to the bride's father on this festal occasion. Twinkle, in addition to her onerous duties as first bridesmaid, constituted herself dressing-maid to the housekeeper, and with deft fingers crimped the latter's shining bands of hair out of their puritan straightness, basted ruches, and tacked lace, where ruches and lace had never been before, losing off her eyeglasses at intervals of two minutes as Miss Dorothy protested feebly. But on this great occasion, Twinkle acknowledged no obstacle. She wound Tom's chain three or four times around her ear to hold her glasses on, and paid no more heed to Miss Cobb's remonstrances than if that lady had been a graven image.

"There!" she exclaimed at last, a ring of pardonable pride in her tone. "What kind of a tirewoman am I?"

"A tireless woman, more likely," muttered Miss Cobb, seeking sombre comfort in a pun, as she rose for a look into the long glass. But every vestige of doubt and ingratitude vanished with the first sight of her resplendent reflection arrayed in trailing black silk and lace, the simple, graceful coiffure which had brought tears into her eyes in the doing, surmounting all in an astonishingly becoming manner.

"Why, Nell, you're a witch!" was her exclamation, and her unconscious, amazed expression paid a high tribute to Twinkle's art.

"And now for my own transformation scene," said the young lady. "Don't rush around, Miss Cobb, or you'll lose your crimps," and she was off to don the dainty, gauzy costume, which so sets off her piquant face as she stands now near the bride, in one end of the long drawing room, listening to the congratulations that pour in, in a kindly, monotonous stream.

Regy advances, rather late in the evening, and Leslie takes his hand.

"I don't know what they all kiss you for," he grumbles, looking up at his sister's radiant beauty.

"Because they are glad I am so happy, and they congratulate me because I have married Douglas, dear," she returns with a loving smile. "They don't all kiss me, but you will?"

Regy performs the salute without much ardor.

"And not a word for me?" asks Douglas. "Are you sorry to have me for a brother?"

Regy bores his heel into the carpet. There is a vague jealousy within him which he, himself, does not comprehend.

"By the way, Regy," continues Douglas, carelessly, "if you care to use that bamboo rod of mine while we are gone, I'll send it up."

There is a cessation of the boring process, and the boy's face brightens.

"Hope to die?"

"Certainly. You may as well keep it. I can easily have another made."

Regy shakes hands cordially with this admirable relative, and at once takes him into his heart of hearts.

"Leslie, you've married a brick," he announces, and marches off with his gloved hands in his pockets.

Miss Cobb seizes upon him as he passes.

"Regy," she asks cautiously, "does my hair look all right?"

Regy surveys her with one eye closed, and a critical air.

"You do look gay to-night, that's a fact."

The housekeeper heaves a sigh of relief. "All right. One side seemed to feel a little heavier than the other and I was afraid it might be coming down; but mercy, I don't know why it should, I've stood all the evening as stiff as a doll-pin-cushion. Hasn't everything gone beautifully?"

"Yes, but I'm getting hungry again. Don't you want to come and have some tutti-frutti?"

Miss Cobb follows placidly, like one in a dream. Regy realizes that the usually alert care-taker will not count the number of times he accepts cake to-night, and being a prudent youth he makes hay while the sun shines.

Mr. Lamkin wanders aimlessly about until he sees his opportunity to approach the star of the evening; then he advances and shakes her hand and his own head with equal dolor.

"I had a very peculiar pain, a moment ago," he says. "It convinces me of something which I have long suspected. I have *heart disease*!"

"I hope only of the kind that seems prevalent now," returns Leslie.

Mr. Lamkin motions her away. "You intend to be playful," he says, "I fear I am not in a state to reply fittingly. Mr. Favernel are you a nervous man?"

"I believe not," returns that gentleman looking down upon the Lamkin with an expression half amused, half puzzled.

"All the better for you sir. I was only going to say that you'll find Miss Forrest—beg pardon, your wife, very agreeable to live with, she'll never jump around or anything of that sort." So, having bestowed his highest meed of praise, and furthermore covered himself with glory by wishing the bride "many happy returns of the day," Mr. Lamkin withdraws.

"Poor Eustace," says Nell to Laible, "he is a lamkin that always bleats out of tune. Do you know he has given up the law as being too confining for him, and is going back to Brenton?"

"Then I suppose we may expect him to be present on that day which must not be far off now, Twinkle."

"Do you ever reflect how it will rain and hail poetry in those days?" asks Twinkle, seriously.

"I only reflect on the fact that I am the happiest man in the world," returns Laible, and the commonplace speech is more musical in Nell's ears than all the symphonies and poems ever written by mortal.

There is a slight lull in the incoming stream of guests, and Douglas Favernel turns to the exquisite creature beside him for his first quiet word.

"My darling, I have an apology to make to you."

Leslie looks up with eyes full of love and trust.

"I once told you that Fairylands was a thing of the past. Forgive me; that was during my benighted days. Now I know that before us lies an enchanted life, more beautiful than any imagined in bygone years, and she that has opened my eyes is 'the stateliest and the best and the loveliest of all women upon earth;' my pearl of great price, my precious wife."

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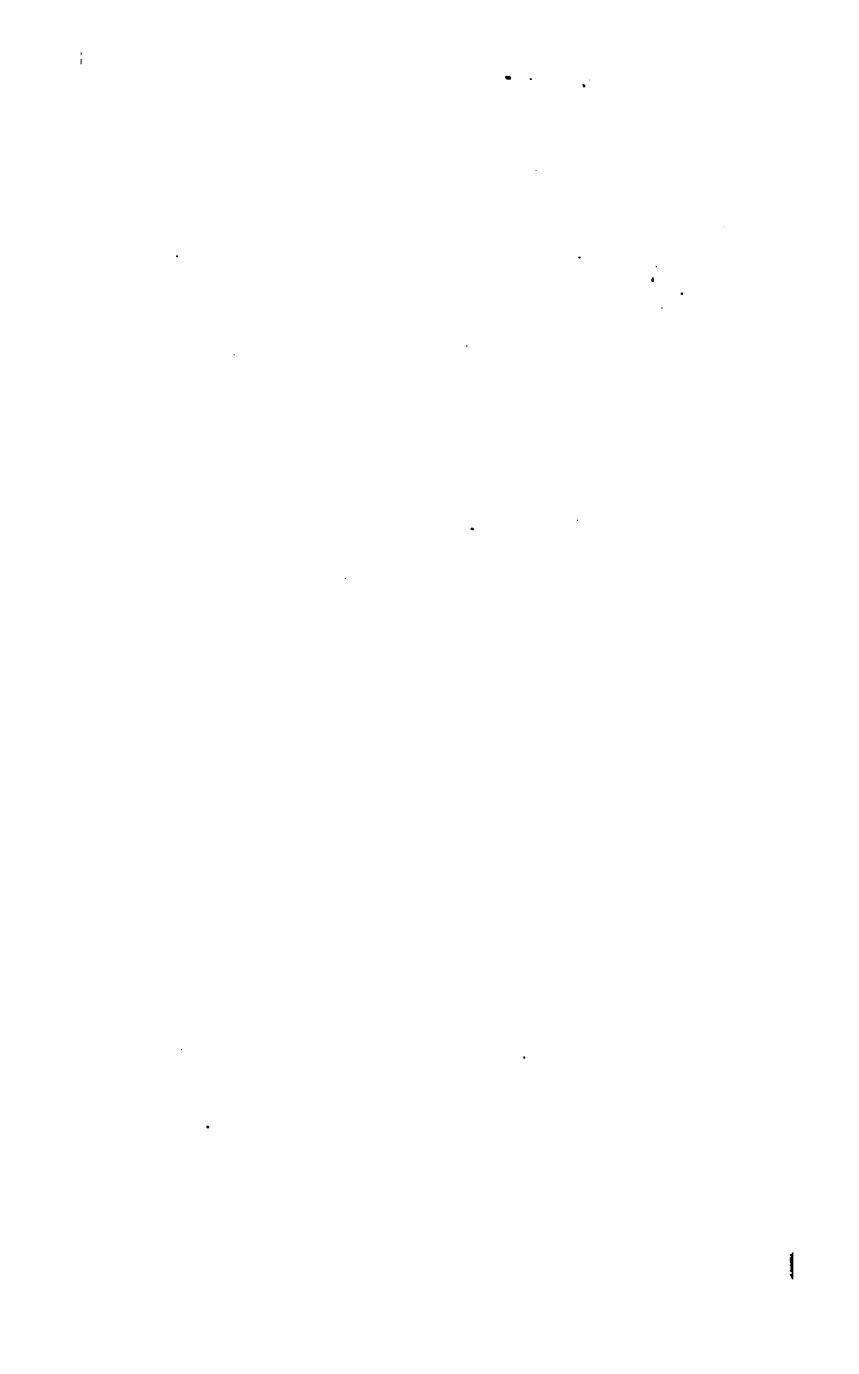
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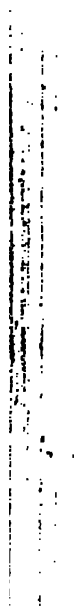
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